

# **THE HISTORY OF THE MADISON SQUARE GARDEN POULTRY SHOW 1883-1950**

by

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The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show was—to borrow a slogan from the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus—THE GREATEST [POULTRY] SHOW ON EARTH. Why? The combination of several factors. The Garden show: 1) encompassed the heyday of exhibition poultry in America, when the numbers of breeders/exhibitors were at their peak and when prices for stock soared to the staggering heights of thousands of dollars per bird; 2) attracted the best birds, breeders, and showmen from across America and from Great Britain and Canada; 3) set the gold standard for how to run and promote a poultry show; 4) ran during a time when New Yorkers attended in great numbers such live entertainment attractions; 5) ran during a time when animals were a more integral part of everyone's lives; 6) was held in Madison Square Garden—the most famous entertainment showcase in New York City in an era when New York City reigned supreme as the entertainment capital of the world. There was nowhere more prestigious, more glamorous, or more exciting than “The Garden” to show poultry.

Yes, the Poultry Show at Madison Square Garden was more than a chicken show. It was a spectacle; an extravaganza; a pageantry of poultry, people, and a place. Few of us are fortunate enough to have been there during its glory days. But most of us who have been in the exhibition poultry fancy for a while have heard about it. That alone says something of its magic, considering

the fact that the first show in Madison Square Garden was held more 120 years ago and the last show still more than half a century ago.

This article presents a historical overview of the poultry show at Madison Square Garden. We will begin by taking a brief look at the early evolution of the exhibition poultry fancy leading up to the premier Garden show in 1883, when poultry shows anywhere in the world were less than 40 years old. To appreciate more fully the Garden's uniqueness as a venue for a poultry show we examine the three buildings which, in succession, were called Madison Square Garden. We'll focus on their creation, structure, and management and take a brief glimpse at some of the other events they showcased to the world that created the mystique of "the Garden" (see 1, 2).

As you would expect, the Garden poultry show suffered, endured, or embraced many changes over its 70-year run relative to its sponsorship, management, rules and regulations, classes, awards, exhibitors, entry fees, entry numbers, layout, commercial and educational exhibits, judging, sales, advertising and promotion, press coverage, and reaction to outside events, such as the Great Depression and two World Wars. These changes we also chronicle as the best available original documentation has allowed. Our reference sources include the Garden show's official *Premium Lists*, *Catalogues*, *Buyers' Guides*, and other self-published literature; numerous articles and advertisements in poultry journals and the non-poultry press; published illustrations and photographs; books; and personal interviews from the lucky few who were there or had the benefit of first-hand accounts from others who were there. The information we present is by no means complete but we hope it is accurate. We welcome corrections and additions—especially when accompanied by published documentation.

It should also be noted here that we have tried to be faithful to the spelling and nomenclature of the times. Thus, you may see "Crevecoeur," "La Fleche,"

“Sebright,” “Catalogue,” for example, spelled several different ways depending on the accepted usage of the time.

## **POULTRY SHOWS BEFORE MADISON SQUARE GARDEN**

The first public exhibition of domestic poultry was held at the Zoological Gardens in London in 1845. On display were a few trios of Malay, Polish, Black Spanish, Dorkings, Surrey Fowls, and Sebright bantams—all presented in a single row of cages placed side by side along a garden pathway. Although there was a judge and prizes were awarded, it wasn't much of a show as we think of one today. Then again, at the time, poultry fanciers, i.e., people who kept distinctive breeds of chickens for other than strictly utilitarian purposes, were about as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth.

This humble beginning to the exhibition of domestic fowls was all about to change: swiftly, dramatically, and permanently. The reason was an unlikely gift from the British Ambassador to China to Her Majesty Queen Victoria who was an avid lover of birds. The gift, in commemoration of the reopening of trade between China and England, was of seven Cochin-China fowls, the likes of which had never been seen in the western hemisphere. In April 1846, Queen Victoria exhibited her Asian wonderfowl at the Royal Dublin Agricultural Society show. Gargantuan in size and regal in splendor, these chickens captured the imagination of commoner and nobleman alike. “Cochin mania” swept across the British countryside as purebred chickens, especially those of Asian origin, were elevated to a status of unprecedented respectability and focus of interest. Suddenly everyone, it seemed, was interested in keeping fancy chickens. More public exhibitions followed in London's Regent's Park. In 1849 the first “real”

poultry show, more or less as we know them today, was held in Bingley Hall, Birmingham.

By that time, a much more virulent strain of “Cochin mania” had found its way to America where it was called “hen fever”— a disease that ravaged the mind and soul of many Americans with the bizarre and almost incomprehensible obsession to keep, breed, and exhibit fancy poultry.

Boston doctor John C. Bennett promoted the first American poultry show, which was held in the Public Gardens, Boston, on November 14, 1849. Two hundred and nineteen exhibitors displayed 1,023 chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys. The show was so popular with the poultry-crazed public, it was extended to a second day. One year later, over 400 exhibitors exhibited 12,000 fowls at the second Boston Poultry Show. As hen fever reached epidemic proportions, more shows followed and the price of fancy fowls soared to staggering heights.

To capitalize on both the public fascination and the willingness of fanciers to pay exorbitant prices for birds, the legendary showman P. T. Barnum staged the first national poultry show in his American Museum in New York City in 1854. He called it the Grande Exhibition of Poultry. The scheduled one-week exhibition was so well attended by the admission-paying public, that Barnum extended the show for six more days.

Although the frenzied pitch of hen-fever waned in the years immediately following Barnum’s show, a strong interest in fancy poultry continued. Enthusiasts formed national breed clubs and local poultry associations and sponsored annual shows. In 1866, the Massachusetts Poultry Club held the first modern-type poultry show in America where judging followed previously agreed to standards and rules. In what was probably the biggest show of the post-Civil War era to date, the New York State Poultry Society held its first annual fair at the Empire City Skating Rink building in New York City in 1869.

Indicative of what would later become common at larger poultry shows, this early New York show offered classes not only for poultry—chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys—but also for other fowls and pet stock as well, including peafowl, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeons, swans, wild waterfowl, rabbits, guinea pigs, wild song birds, quail, parrots, canaries, golden eagles, dogs, cats, ferrets, squirrels, mink, fawns, ponies, trout, salmon, bass, parlor aquaria, and dressed poultry. The Society also offered awards for the Best Approved Thesis On The Breeding And Management Of Poultry, the Best Approved Plans And Specifications Of Poultry Buildings And Yards, the Best Approved Means With Model Of Apparatus For Transporting Poultry, the Best Devices For Feeding And Watering Fowls, the Best Exhibition Of Specimens Of Taxidermy, and the Best Hen's Nest. It is little wonder that these early poultry shows were so well attended and that they received so much publicity.

The early shows of Boston and New York were rare in having their poultry entries judged according to a published standard, e.g., that promulgated by William B. Tegetmeier in 1867, describing what a bird of a certain breed and variety should look like. Most shows, particularly those held as a part of state and county fairs, suffered from the lack of any scientific, consistent, or regulated system by which to judge birds and award prizes. Poultry authors, breeders, exhibitors, show officials, and judges all had their own opinions of what comprised a prize-winning bird. A bird's attributes notwithstanding, judges frequently awarded prizes as political gratuities to fair officials or to exhibitors of special friendship or influence. Sometimes judges even judged and awarded hefty prizes to their own birds! By the early 1870s, the whimsical judging, graft, and self-dealing had soured the fancy to the point that entry numbers plummeted, shows closed down, and the future of exhibition poultry seemed all but doomed.

In response to the crisis, poultry breeders from the United States and Canada met in Buffalo, New York, in February 1873. The meeting's outcome was the formation of the American Poultry Association and, one year later, publication of the APA's first *American Standard of Excellence*, which contained detailed descriptions of 80 varieties of domestic poultry.

Not surprisingly, the new *Standard* was neither universally nor immediately accepted, especially by fanciers who had been breeding birds for years with attributes different than those the APA now decreed to be mandatory. Heated debates raged in the pages of poultry journals. But as poultry show sponsors came to embrace the APA's general rules of conduct that required all breeds be judged, usually by APA licensed judges, according to the *Standard*, new life was breathed back into the dying fancy. Within a decade, a second wave of hen fever, even more virulent than the first, spread across the country and a new era of poultry shows was born.

## **MADISON SQUARE GARDEN**

### **THE BUILDINGS AS SHOWCASES OF ENTERTAINMENT**

#### **Madison Square Garden I — From Humble Beginnings**

The same year that the American Poultry Association was formed in Buffalo another seemingly unrelated creation was underway 400 miles down state in New York City. Almost 20 years after staging the first "National Poultry Show," P. T. Barnum was now in the traveling circus business. Barnum envisioned having his own exhibition complex to quarter his menagerie and stage his spectacles of fantasy. What better place, he thought, than New York City—

the entertainment capital of the world—and what better place in New York City than around Madison Square—a four and a half acre park just off Fifth Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, once touted as the central point of life and splendor in uptown New York?

Tucked amidst the fashionable townhouses, palatial homes, and luxury hotels of Madison Square were the much less splendid structures of the freight terminal and horse stable of the New York & Harlem Railroad and the graceless passenger depot of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Abandoned for two years since Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt had consolidated his railroad operations 16 blocks north at Grand Central Terminal, the dilapidated buildings caught the showman's eye. Barnum leased the old station from Vanderbilt, spent \$35,000 to rebuild the depot, encircled it with a 28-foot-high brick wall, created an open yard inside measuring 425 feet by 200 feet, and within that constructed an elliptical arena 270 feet long, which he flanked with rows of wooden seats. (1, 2)

On April 27, 1874, the impresario opened his complex, which was called Barnum's Monster Classical and Geological Hippodrome. At a dollar a head, Barnum entertained 15,000 people at a time with the spectacle of everything from chariot races with female drivers to cowboys chasing Indians and vice-versa, Japanese tumblers, freak shows, Arabian horses, waltzing elephants, and the flagged spectacle of the Congress of Nations.

Three months after opening his Great Roman Hippodrome, Barnum took his show on the road. When he returned to New York, his largely open-air complex was beset with the cold dampness of winter. The likelihood of drawing paying customers in such weather was equally slight not to mention winter's effect on his performers. Barnum quickly threw in the towel and headed south,

auctioning off his lease on the property to the popular band leader Partick Sarsfield Gilmore.

Gilmore dressed up the old depot with fountains, statues, potted plants, and gravel walks, and reopened it under the name Gilmore's Garden. Probably more successful at attracting audiences than Barnum envisioned, Gilmore offered revival and temperance meetings, policemen's balls, a beauty contest, flower shows and, in 1877, the first Westminster Kennel Show. As good as the gate receipts were, it wasn't enough. Gilmore resorted to what he hoped would raise his slipping attendance: boxing. Skirting with technicalities of New York state law forbidding a "contention with fists," Gilmore's venture seemed to work well enough until his lease ran out in 1878. (1,2)

The new lessee was W. M. Tileston, an executive of the dog show who tried his hand at making the complex viable by adding a riding school, an archery range, lawn tennis, and, in a bold attempt to turn the weather to his favor, an ice carnival. Tileston's reign was, however, short-lived, owing to the death of Commodore Vanderbilt, whose empire still owned the old railroad property at Madison Square. The empire's new chief was Vanderbilt's son, William, who had his own ideas for entertainment use of the Madison Square property. Although he would continue to allow the dog show, circuses, and other special tenants to use the complex, he intended to rededicate the old railroad shed for use as an athletic center. On Memorial Day, 1879, Vanderbilt proclaimed a new name for the old complex. He would call it Madison Square Garden—the first of four structures to bear the name. (1,2)

As with his predecessors, Vanderbilt's challenge was to make his Garden a financial success by booking entertainment the public would pay to come see. And for him, the pressure was even greater as the Madison Square area continued to solidify its reign as the center of the city's public life. His opening



night concert, hardly of the athletic nature he promised to promote, was, nevertheless, a smashing success. People came by the thousands. But such full houses were few and far between for the next three years until, to his financial rescue, came two elephants, a boxer, and a horse show.

Even after P. T. Barnum passed along his lease on the Madison Square complex to Gilmore, Barnum made regular annual return visits to the Garden with his traveling circus. Circuses were an immensely popular form of entertainment, and Barnum being Barnum, he was always up to the annual challenge of topping his circus's main attraction of the year before. In 1882 he had a little help from Mother Nature, or rather from "Queen," one of his twenty-two elephants. Queen gave birth to the second baby elephant ever born in captivity in either America or Europe. When the Barnum and Bailey Circus opened for the season at Madison Square Garden in March 1882, the baby elephant, Bridgeport, stole the show. As Barnum himself described the attendance: "Day after day, night after night, we turned away multitudes for want of room." Such an event could only have been staged in Madison Square Garden. But Barnum wasn't finished. He had another trick—or actually elephant—up his sleeve.

Earlier that same year—and much to the consternation of Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, members of the Royal Zoological Society, and just about everyone else in England—Barnum successfully negotiated the purchase of Jumbo—the largest elephant ever seen— from the London Zoo, for the astonishing sum of \$10,000.

Jumbo, all six and half tons of him, arrived in New York by steamship on April 6, 1882. In a spectacle truly worthy of Barnum, a procession of sixteen horses pulled and two elephants pushed Jumbo's flatcar from the docks to (where else?) Madison Square Garden, where little Bridgeport was still dazzling the crowds.

Jumbo's famous promenade through the city, typical of Barnum's flare for creating a spectacle, set the stage for a tradition. Each year thereafter, the Barnum & Bailey Circus elephants paraded through the city in proclamation of the circus's opening at Madison Square Garden which to New Yorkers was synonymous with the arrival of spring.

In only four days on exhibition at the Garden, Jumbo not only recouped Barnum's purchase price of \$10,000, but also the \$30,000 Barnum had paid to transport him to America. Forty thousand dollars was a lot of money in 1882, and Madison Square Garden's future reputation as the showcase of the spectacular took root.

Vanderbilt followed up the Garden's financial success with the circus by booking the sensational bareknuckle heavyweight boxing champion John L. Sullivan as its main event on July 17 that same year. Over 10,000 would-be patrons were turned away at the door for lack of room. The mighty Sullivan transformed boxing's image from one of barbarism embraced primarily by the "lower classes" to one of, at least, moderate respectability. For the first time, boxing matches were attended by the upper crust of New York society. (1,2)

In 1883, as Sullivan continued to fill the seats on fight nights, the Garden hosted the First Annual Show of Horses, Ponies, Mules, and Donkeys. This first National Horse Show proved another financial success for Vanderbilt, and again the old railroad shed took on an air of grandeur, especially with the horsey set of New York's upper crust, and that only bolstered the Garden's growing image as New York's showcase of entertainment. Even more important, this first National Horse Show directed the future of Madison Square Garden as home to the best animal exhibitions in America.

While the circus, boxing, and horse show drew capacity crowds, most of the other events Vanderbilt booked into the Garden didn't. It was into this

unprofitable mix of flower shows, revivals, indoor track meets, Elks' conventions, masquerade balls, cattle sales, and temperance lectures that Madison Square Garden hosted what we believe was its first poultry show, February 13-16, 1883.

As Garden owners Barnum, Gilmore, and Tileston had found out before him, Vanderbilt soon realized that the main problem in making the Garden a financial success was New York's inclement weather for too much of the year. The old railroad complex was just too old and ill-suited for the need. Although in its short 10-year history it had had its moments of punctuated greatness as the premier entertainment venue in America's greatest city, Vanderbilt announced that, as reported in *Harper's Weekly*, the "patched-up, grimy, drafty, combustible old shell" would have to come down. (1)

Vanderbilt's decision to raze the Garden did not sit well with members of the Horse Show Association. Without the Garden, they said, they would have no place to hold their National Horse Show. Fortunately, as charter members of the Garden, the Horse Association had enough financial clout to do something about it. If the "old" Garden wasn't good enough, then they'd build one that was. James T. Woodward and several other well-heeled members of the Association formed a syndicate with even wealthier members of New York society—most notably, the financier and philanthropist John Pierpoint (J.P.) Morgan. In 1887, they raised \$1,500,000 to finance the building of a new Madison Square Garden on the same site as its predecessor.

The splendor, excitement, and romance that would become synonymous with Madison Square Garden had their roots, in large part, in the syndicate's choice of an architect, Stanford White, the most celebrated designer of the time. White's artistic inventiveness almost single handedly, it seemed, was taking New York City to staggering new heights of architectural glory. To make way for

Stanford White's "new" Madison Square Garden, the "old" Garden was razed in July 1889.

### **Madison Square Garden II — The "Palace of Pleasure"**

Just eleven months later, Madison Square Garden II (costing somewhere around \$3 million—roughly \$61 million in today's dollars), upheld Stanford White's reputation as architect *extraordinaire* and more than fulfilled *Harper's Weekly* prophecy of a "palace of pleasure."

The complex measured 200 by 485 feet with an exterior of yellow brick and white Pompeian terra-cotta. The grand entrance of lavender marble was flanked by Roman colonnades and arches and above all, a giant tower soared 320 feet into the sky, making the new Garden the second tallest building in all New York. Perched atop the tower, to revolve on ball bearings in response to the wind, was an 18-foot (later replaced by a 13-foot version) copper statue of the goddess Diana the huntress in a provocative and, for many, offensive state of undress. (1,2)

Inside, White created the largest auditorium in existence, 200 by 350 feet, with an 80-foot-high ceiling, that offered seating for 8,000 and floor space for several thousand more. There was a 1,200-seat theatre, a 1,500-seat concert hall, space for the largest restaurant in New York City, and a rooftop garden cabaret. (1,2)

The future home of the world's greatest annual poultry show was an architectural masterpiece of beauty and grandeur.

Madison Square Garden II opened on June 16, 1890, to a full house of 17,000 patrons, paying up to \$50 (\$1,025 today's equivalent) for the privilege of attending two grand ballets and a concert conducted by Eduard Strauss of

Vienna. Thereafter, such sell-out crowds were disappointingly few and far between.

Boxing exhibitions offered some respite to the poor attendance, but the old sure thing for packing the house, John L. Sullivan, was just that—getting old. A newcomer, James J. Corbett of San Francisco, attempted with fair success to fill the niche and eventually took the title from Sullivan, albeit in New Orleans and not in the Garden.

To bolster attendance, Frank K. Sturgis, president of the Garden, tried such innovations as installing a banked track for six-day bicycle races and, thanks to the invention of the internal combustion engine, an auto show.

One bright spot on the Garden's calendar was the National Horse Show with a change in emphasis from beauty to function. Over 600 horses were entered each year and conveniently and comfortably stabled in the Garden's basement. The horse show was a society event. The local press estimated that an "average" society dame attending the horse show was bedecked in over \$13,000 (\$266,800 today) worth of "fashion". The show received a further boost in popularity from the ensuing sensation created when Lillie Langtry, the English actress and ethereal love interest of America's wild west Judge Roy Bean, leaned over the railing and kissed her prancing hunter. The New York sanitation commission was outraged by the public display of bestial affection and attempted, unsuccessfully, to pass a city ordinance making it illegal to kiss a horse in public.

But even the horse show as grand as it was, couldn't cover the Garden's bills. The new complex cost \$20,000 a month to operate, nightly rentals rarely brought in more than \$1,500, and a \$2 million mortgage was yet to be paid. Within its first two years, the Garden had lost over \$34,000. (1,2)

To the Garden's financial rescue, it was hoped, came two former sportswriters with a promotional flare: Harry (Dresden China Kid) M. Pollock and Daniel (Dapper Dan) P. Mcketrick. The duo tried everything to fill the Garden's empty seats: rollerskating, basketball on rollerskates, foreign wrestlers, daredevil bicyclists, bicycle races, and physical-culture shows (which were often shut down in mid-performance by the police).

In 1900, William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt filled the hall with political oratory; in 1905, a wine and spirits show made its debut; and in 1906, boxing reappeared under the clever ruse of turning the Garden into a "club," and thereby evading the city-wide ban on the sport. But perhaps the most memorable night in Garden II came when its flamboyant creator, Stanford White, was murdered in the rooftop cabaret by the jealous husband of one his former actress girlfriends. Memorable maybe, but it did little to stem the flow of red ink.

By 1908, the Garden was a fading shadow of its once radiant glory. Its financial woes precluded badly needed maintenance, and its gallery-seat clientele had sunk to hobos, who paid fifty cents for admission to the six-day bicycle races and stayed for all six days. For the Garden's directors, enough was enough. They voted to put the Garden on the market for \$3,500,000. Three years later, F. & D. Company, a real estate concern, bought the complex for considerably less. Just five years later, with neither the expertise of successfully running an entertainment venture nor the financial fortitude to withstand America's inevitable draw into the war in Europe, F. & D. went bankrupt. Holding the \$2,300,000 mortgage was the New York Life Insurance Company, which promptly foreclosed and became the Garden's new owner. (1,2)

New York Life had little interest, and no experience, in operating an entertainment venue like Madison Square Garden, particularly during the austere years of the first World War. Certainly, developing the site as an office building or

other real estate venture would make more sense, but each time a decision for such action surfaced, public pressure defeated the notion. New Yorkers may not have always put their money where their mouths were when it came to filling Garden seats, but they loved their Garden and no one was going to take it away.

Paradoxically, riding in like a knight in shining armor, came a former gambler, saloon-keeper, lumberjack, gold rush stampeder, and natural-born promotor, George Lewis “Tex” Rickard. Tex proved his acumen for promoting boxing as the war continued overseas and Americans tightened their purse strings. He borrowed \$10,000 and leased the Garden for a fight (legal under the Frawley Law: no knockdowns, no decisions) between heavyweight champion Jess Willard and Frank Morgan. Tex’s promotional genius returned a one night gate of \$152,000—the largest in the Garden’s history. (1,2)

In 1920, just sixty days after the Walker Law legalized boxing in New York state, Tex signed a ten-year lease on the Garden for \$200,000 a year. A year earlier, he forged a long-term business relationship with a little known Colorado heavyweight named William Harrison “Jack” Dempsey, who was soon to become one of the greatest boxers of all time. With a newly refurbished Garden and the Manassa Mauler Dempsey in his promotional back pocket, Tex was convinced that in the new atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties prizefighting would lead the parade of other attendance-getting events and restore the Garden to its former days of glory as America’s showcase of entertainment. These other events included the old staples, such as the circus, horse show, poultry show, track meets, and six-day bicycle races as well as new events like the Annual New York Roundup: Rodeo and Stampede. Once Tex even flooded the arena floor for an AAU swimming meet, and when the meet was over he offered use of the pool to his paying customers. (1,2)

The revitalized Madison Square Garden drew the whole country's attention in the summer of 1924 when it hosted the Democratic National Convention. Working out of the newly painted animal stalls in the Garden's basement, telegraph and radio technicians kept Americans informed as the deadlocked convention—the longest in history—went on for 16 days and 103 ballots amidst the cheers and boos of boisterous spectators that on some days numbered over 13,000. Finally, John W. Davis received the nomination, only to be soundly thumped by Calvin Coolidge just four months later.

It's ironic that only shortly after the Garden reached its zenith in national and international recognition that New York Life announced its plans to raze the palace of pleasure and erect a forty-story office building as its corporate headquarters on the site. This time, public pressure, if there was any, failed to win another postponement. The final event in Garden II was a lightweight boxing match held on May 5, 1924.

Tex Rickard was hardly caught off guard by the insurance company's announcement. He was already envisioning a new complex, one, unlike Garden II, that was specifically designed for boxing and inside sports. He quickly secured \$6 million for the project from his business associates and Wall Street financiers—a group he referred to as “my 600 millionaires.” Four months before Garden II's final event, the wrecking ball was already at work, twenty-five blocks uptown on Eighth Avenue, clearing an old trolley barn for what, despite its location, would be called the *new* Madison Square Garden. (1,2)

For 34 years Madison Square Garden II had served as the most illustrious entertainment venue in New York City; and for all 34 of those years, it was the home to the most famous poultry show in the world.

### **Madison Square Garden III — Without the Grandeur**



The “new” Madison Square Garden, located between Forty-ninth and Fiftieth Streets at Eighth Avenue, was built in a scant 249 days at a cost of about \$5,600,000. Far from the opulence of Stanford White’s “palace of pleasure,” Garden III was a box of a building of functional design and construction. “Dedicated to Athletics, Amusements and the Industrial Arts,” it measured 200 feet by 375 feet, had triple tiers of seats connected by escalators, and with chairs on the floor could accommodate 18,500 people. “It had 10 microphones, 10 public-address speakers, and 29 spotlights and 296 other lights strung 79 feet above the arena.” (1)

Garden III began its reign with a preliminary opening on November 28, 1925. The first event, a six-day bicycle race, was followed on December 6, with a basketball game, and in the week that followed by two boxing matches. The formal grand opening of the new Madison Square Garden on December 15 featured the introduction of what was then a new sport from North of the border, ice hockey. The Montreal Canadiens faced off against the largely-created-for-the-evening team of the New York Americans. It was a sell-out crowd and to Tex Rickard that meant one thing: hockey had come to the Garden to stay. So confident was he in the sport’s American future—and as a Garden money-maker—that he quickly formed his own team, Tex’s Rangers. In just one night, Madison Square Garden regained its rightful place as the city’s premier showcase of entertainment in the era of the Roaring Twenties when nightlife was *the way of life*. (1)

Just three weeks after Garden III’s grand opening, the arena hosted the Thirty-seventh Exhibition of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, January 6-10, 1926. Exhibition poultry was in the second decade of its heyday in the 20th century and for five full days competitive sports waited on the sidelines while

fancy chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, and pet stock lured thousands of New Yorkers and visitors from near and far through the gate. Tex Rickard had not forgotten the city's old favorites, and while bicycle races, boxing, and new sports like hockey, tennis, and basketball would reshape the Garden's image, the reliable oldies of entertainment like the poultry show, horse show, dog show, rodeo, and circus would continue to have their place on the Garden's marquis. Such salubrious forms of family entertainment were in marked contrast to life outside the Garden's walls where the Age of Gangsterism flourished amidst the thirst and greed of Prohibition.

Through the end of the twenties, the Garden made money, thanks in large part to the almost fanatical attraction of the six-day bicycle races when, contrary to rumor, individual riders were required to be on their bikes for every hour of every day for six days. While the daytime audience was composed of fans and curious onlookers, the evening crowd arrived following Broadway's last curtain call and stayed until dawn watching and gaming the races, while imported jazz bands and song pluggers filled the air.

The typically jubilant crowds of the Garden suddenly became solemn in January 1929 when Tex Rickard, the mastermind behind the Garden's success, passed away. In fitting tribute, his body lay in state in the Garden's arena as thousands of friends, colleagues, and patrons filed past to pay their respects. The loss of Rickard was a blow, and the year was not yet done casting a shadow of gloom over "the house that Tex built." In October 1929, the Black Tuesday stock market crash ushered in the Great Depression. By the end of the year, stockholders had lost \$40 billion in paper values—more than the total U.S. cost of World War I. A year later, nearly seven million Americans were out of work, and more than 1,300 banks across the nation had closed their doors. By 1932, the unemployment figure had doubled, bank closures tripled, and U.S. industry

operated at less than half of its 1929 volume. In the reality of the Depression, when it “was difficult to promote anything,” Madison Square Garden finances reflected the national trend: profits in 1927 of more than a million dollars plummeted to a mere \$130,000 in 1931, and into red ink shortly thereafter.

From 1926 through the first years of the depression, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., continued to hold its annual January show. Association Secretary/Treasurer and General Manager in charge of the show, Lincoln Orr, called the 1930 exhibition “the best show ever held in the Garden,” with total number of exhibits surpassing the five thousand mark. Amazingly, while the rest of the country spiraled into fiscal ruin, the poultry show at Madison Square Garden actually made money.

The organization's good fortune lasted one more year. Entries for 1931 were up over the previous year, especially in pigeons, which surpassed 2,400 birds. Plans for the 1932 Garden show proceeded as always with advertisements placed in trade journals and premium lists mailed to potential exhibitors. Only weeks before the scheduled opening on January 6<sup>th</sup>, *Everybody's Poultry Magazine* broke the news that due to insufficient entries, the association's board of directors had voted to call off the show. “Undoubtedly this first break in the long series of successful New York shows is but temporary. With the millions to draw from in the New York area, plus the interest of an ever increasing number of city people who attend the New York show with an idea of some day ‘keeping chickens’ away from the city's whirl—New York will not remain long off the poultry show map” (3). Unfortunately, such was not the case. It would be 12 years before chickens once again crowed inside the “house that Tex built.”

That the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., did not hold an exhibition in Madison Square Garden for a dozen years does not mean there were no poultry shows held in New York City during the depression years of the

1930s and early war years of the 40s. “After the Garden Show was forced to close . . . Mr. Lincoln Orr called a meeting of the poultrymen at the Hotel Taft on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1932, to discuss ways and means of holding another poultry show in the great city of New York. It was then that THE NEW YORK SHOW was started and a stock company formed” (4).

In 1933, the New York Poultry Show, Inc., held its first show at the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Armory. The new association had T. A. Havemeyer, former President of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., as its Honorary President and Silas H. Andrews as its President. Other cross-overs from the Garden show included W. J. Stanton and Fred W. Otte. New, and now familiar, names among the officers and directors of the fledgling organization included John Kriner, P. F. Wannemacher, Paul Ives, A. O. Schilling, and Mort Cooper.

The New York Poultry Show picked up where Madison Square Garden show left off. Its second show, held in January 1934—not too distant from the depth of the national Depression—boasted over 7,000 entries “booked well in advance of the closing date” and secured the services of “about 45 judges who are to pin the awards” (5). Further reflecting the improving economy, “Mr. Jos. Boorster, vice-president of the Charles Advertising Service, New York City, which has full charge of the leasing of commercial exhibits, reports that there has been an active demand for space and that reservations far exceed last year’s total floor space.” The New York Show actually hired an advertising agency to promote the show! The Great Depression notwithstanding, the New York Poultry Show was doing just fine.

From 1933 to 1937 the country slowly inched its way toward brighter economic horizons. The February 1936 issue of *The Poultry Item* summed up the mood of the times: “The whole poultry world, especially the fanciers, have been waiting for favorable omens, foretelling reviving interest and restored prosperity

of the poultry business. This winter the poultry shows, especially the New York show, seem to have supplied the favorable omens, needed by the fanciers, to restore their faith and confidence." As proof, "the size of the entry and the number in attendance were the largest since the show has been held at the Armory."

Noteworthy at the 1936 New York Show was the debut of a new breed called Foxhurst Rainbows, "originated by Hubbard." Nineteen exhibitors showed Foxhurst Rainbows! They were described as "black, with beautiful beetle-green sheen, and . . . red stripings in saddle and hackle; a blocky bird about the size of Plymouth Rocks." The breed was never admitted to the APA Standard. The largest class in the show was White Leghorns, followed by White Plymouth Rocks with 17 cockerels on exhibit. "Barred Plymouth Rocks, both Light and Dark varieties, brought out 67 singles and five trios." A further comment on the economy comes from the show sales department: "More sales were made at New York this year than for many years; but at no record-breaking prices. Dan Young was offered \$100 for his 1<sup>st</sup> Cock; but this did not interest him, any more than did an offer of \$5000 from Wm. Barry Owen, a few years ago, for his 1<sup>st</sup> Cock at Madison Square Garden." (6)

Despite the onset of another recession in 1937, when over three million Americans received Federal relief, fanciers exhibited 5,280 birds at the January 1938 New York Poultry Show. A published marked catalogue listing all entries and their award placements gives the numbers for the 1938 show as: 863 large fowl plus trios, 748 bantams plus trios, 15 geese, 53 ducks, 4 swans, 122 turkeys, 24 pheasants, and 735 pigeons, plus numerous display cages.

*Newsweek* magazine covered the 1938 show in a full page of photographs with captions (7). The center caption read: "The aristocracy of the 600,000,000 chickens annually raised on American farms last week gathered with the elite of

other fowl families at the New York Poultry Show. For those to whom poultry is a livelihood, winning shows is good advertising as well as fun. To the hobbyists, rich and poor, who exhibit the fine-plumed, unbelievably haughty bantams, shows are the final test of breeding skill. Novelty of the week: a double-chinned goose that earns \$250 a week on screen and radio.” Of note among the photos is one of a “crested turkey, the first ever discovered.” The Bronze bird had a large dark flowing crest, extending from the back of its head about one-third down the neck. An overhead shot of the large fowl section reveals that the birds were displayed single tier in double rows of all-wire, modern-day style coops. The Grand Champion of the Show was a Single Comb Black Minorca cock from Virginia.

Meanwhile, back at Madison Square Garden, life went on through the 30s, even without the poultry show. The dark financial clouds of the early Depression years quickly gave way to the brighter skies of a profitable gate. The first sign of brighter times ahead actually came in the worst of the Depression on February 22, 1931 when 22,200 people—the largest attendance in Garden history—paid \$59,469 to watch a wrestling match featuring the glamour boy Jim Londos—the Golden Greek. Wrestling, boxing, basketball, and hockey were regular features on the Garden’s 30’s and early 40’s menu and were garnished on other nights with crowd-appealing new events such as the figure-skating of Sonja Henie, ski show, Ice Follies, lacrosse, dance marathons, girls’ softball, the Bolshoi Ballet, soccer, the Coldstream Guards bagpipers, tennis, and even eventually bowling. Combined with the reliable oldies, sans the poultry show, Madison Square Garden was doing OK.

As the rumblings of war in Europe grew louder, the New York Poultry Show lost its lease on the Armory in August 1940. The ballroom of the Capitol Hotel, coincidentally opposite Madison Square Garden, was secured at “DOUBLE the rental we were paying. Then, after entries were closed, the

cooping company cancelled their contract on account of a strike and I was obliged to purchase cages for the show myself, as none could be rented” (4).

The New York Poultry Show continued to hold strong in numbers in 1940 and 1941 as the nation’s economy and industry tooled up for the war in Europe. And even when war came from the other direction on December 7, 1941, the 1942 show went on as scheduled less than a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor. [A side note: Just four days after the attack and three days after Congress passed a declaration of war against Japan as American men and women enlisted by the thousands, the annual meeting of the American Bantam Association being held in Chicago, had a motion made and passed that “all members in good standing that entered the military service be retained on the active membership list for the duration of the war with no membership fees to be paid” (8).]

By 1943, the effects of the war were revealed in entry numbers. That year only 769 poultry (plus trios) and 146 pigeons were on display. John Kriner, Sr. was General Superintendent in charge of the show.

With the country in the middle of a war seems like an odd time for the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., to make a comeback. But, that’s exactly what it did in December 1943, staging its first show in twelve years in Madison Square Garden. The revived association had a largely new board of directors, some of whom came from the New York Poultry Show, Inc., notably Fred Otte, John Kriner, and Mort Cooper. Two new directors familiar, at least in name, to many of us were Charles Burmaster and Alex Duffy, both from Watertown, New York. It is interesting to note that before 1943, the association’s directors were almost entirely from New York and New Jersey. The new roster of sixteen directors hailed from those states as well as from Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and Oklahoma. Fred

Huyler of New Jersey was the Manager in charge of the 1943 show, and Fred Otte the General Superintendent.

While the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., held its show at the Garden from December 30, 1943 to January 2, 1944, the New York Poultry Show, Inc., held its show fifteen blocks south at Manhattan Center the following week, January 2-7, 1944, using the slogan “The Imperial Poultry Show of the World” (9).

An announcement in the November 4, 1943 issue of *Poultry Press* stated that the American Barred Plymouth Rock and the American White Wyandotte Club have cast their lot in with the New York Show. “These two great groups are but a couple of the live-wire clubs which have signified their intentions of bringing to Manhattan Center [January 2-7, 1944] extra big classes of these two great favorite breeds, for the astute fanciers who are these clubs fully realize that the New York show has been instrumental in keeping alive the true spirit of the American fancier who loves his poultry in the city of New York—these same men also know what it means to be able to say “WON AT NEW YORK.” *Poultry Press* also carried in that issue an announcement that Production Classes would be a part of the 1944 show and that “\$1,000.00 in War Bonds which the A & P Food Stores are laying on the line for special prizes is attracting widespread interest and those who exhibit at the great New York show, paying only \$1.00 entry fee on single birds, will have an opportunity such as never before to cash in this huge amount.”

The preference of exhibitors for the Madison Square Garden Show over that of the New York Poultry Show is revealed by the number of entries: the New York Poultry Show had 469 (plus trios) poultry entries (curiously, no duck entries), 135 pigeon entries, and 42 (plus trios) Production Class entries, while



the Madison Square Garden Show had over six times the poultry entries (2281) and almost five times the pigeon entries (868).

The end of the war boosted poultry show attendance. The 1946 Madison Square Garden show (which a Watertown, NY newspaper called “the fourth annual Madison Square Garden show”—counting from its comeback in 1943) hosted over 6,000 fowls from 35 states and Canada. The Watertown paper notes that the “most valuable entry is a nine-month-old, nine and one-half pound Rhode Island Red single-comb cock named Jerry and valued at \$5,000 by its owner, Harold Tompkins, Concord, Mass.” Charles N. Burmaster was the Show Manager.

In 1949, the New York Poultry Show, Inc., held its 19<sup>th</sup> annual exhibition at the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory in early December, three weeks before the Garden show. The show touted the slogan “WON AT NEW YORK—The Supreme Honor of the Poultry World.” Total entries were 1,606 (plus trios) poultry, 37 pigeons, and 110 pheasants. Included at the show were twice daily culling demonstrations by Prof. H. E. Botsford of Cornell University, fifty commercial exhibits, and a glass and pottery exhibit by the famous Iorio Glass Company (10).

The Garden show in 1949, using the new name “Madison Square Garden Poultry, Pigeon & Rabbit Show” on its premium list and the old title, “Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc.,” on its official catalog, hosted 2067 (plus trios) poultry, 13 pheasants, 751 pigeons, and 148 rabbits. Why the Garden entries were so low, only about half of what they were just three years earlier, is unclear. By the same token, the New York Show numbers were up substantially.

When the exhibitors cooped out of the Garden show on New Year’s Day, 1950, few of them knew they were making history. They were to be the last poultrymen and women to show their birds in the most famous entertainment venue in the world. News of the show’s final end came in the August 17, 1950

issue of *Poultry Press*: “ANNOUNCEMENT. To The Exhibitors and Patronizers of Madison Square Garden Show. Owing to the overhead expenses of the Garden and our contract with them having run out, they have now raised our rent to such an extent as would require us to raise the entry fee to \$5.00 per bird. This I know the exhibitors cannot afford as I have had any letters from them asking if we can reduce the entry fees. Under the above conditions, the officers and directors of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., have voted not to hold our show, but to liquidate at once. We want to take this opportunity to thank our exhibitors for the grand support they have given us in the past. FRED HUYLER, President, Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc.”

In 1950, a national concern with inflation in the wake of a record national debt (\$250 billion) had sparked organized labor to push for higher wages and better working conditions.

The New York Poultry Show, Inc., continued to stage shows in January 1951 and 1952 at the Grand Central Palace; however, this show too felt the financial squeeze of operation: “The excessive cost of union double time for labor and the fact that no show can open its doors before 1:00 P.M. on Sundays, caused the Directors to decide not to include Sunday but to make this a four-day show only . . .” (11).

In 1953, the New York Poultry Show moved outside of New York City to the Westchester County Center in White Plains, NY. Apparently, the cost of holding poultry shows *in* New York City had become prohibitively expensive.

From Barnum’s “Monster Hippodrome” to White’s “palace of pleasure” to “the house that Tex built,” Madison Square Garden hosted poultry shows for almost 70 years. To the seasoned exhibitor and novice alike, it was the Garden itself—rich with history, rife with notoriety, replete with grandeur—that enhanced

the experience to make the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show the grandest annual exhibit of poultry in American history.

## **THE EARLY POULTRY SHOWS AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN I, 1883-1887**

It is, perhaps, worth reminding the reader that the early poultry shows at Madison Square Garden occurred more than 120 years ago. Then, only 38 states comprised the Union, horses and railroads and canals were the means of transportation, light bulbs and telephones were still in their infancy. The first Garden poultry show in 1883 came just two years after Wyatt Earp and the Clanton gang settled their differences by gunfight at the OK Coral, one year after Jesse James came to his just reward, and three years before the Apache warrior Geronimo surrendered. It would be another 13 years before Henry Ford built his first car, 17 years before George Eastman introduced the Brownie box camera, and 20 years before the Wright Brothers took to the air at Kitty Hawk. In 1883, \$1.00 would buy 10 loaves of bread, 10 pounds of sugar, or a bushel of wheat. Hay sold for 2¢ a pound, eggs for 8¢ a dozen, and beer for 5¢ a glass.

In the poultry world, Asiatics were the breeds of choice. Galvanized hexagonal wire netting was becoming widely used. E. B. Thompson was perfecting the soon to be enormously popular Barred Plymouth Rock. The latest edition of the *Standard of Excellence*, which sold for \$1.00, described just 23 breeds and 50 varieties of large fowl, 8 breeds and 15 varieties of bantams, 8 breeds and 10 varieties of ducks, 6 breeds and 7 varieties of geese, 1 breed and 6 varieties of turkeys.

Exhibition poultry had come a long way since Hen Fever claimed its first victims barely 25 years earlier. With growing support for the recently formed APA, poultry shows were again on the rise and the fancy was enjoying a rebound of enthusiasm. The first poultry show in Madison Square Garden would set the stage for what became known as the Premier Poultry Show of the World.

## THE 1883 SHOW

Although *Harper's Weekly* devoted nearly a full page to a review of the show, complete with hand-colored sketches of some entries, the article only teases us modern-day fanciers as to what the first poultry show in Madison Square Garden was really like (12). Nearly half of the article describes the great curiosity of an operating incubator and its miracle of hatching chicks to “the thousands who watched the process day after day during the continuance of the exhibition.” Although the first American incubator was patented in the 1840s, the machine was still a wonder of nature to many—inside and outside the world of poultry. That *thousands* of patrons visited the show over the four days, each presumably paying an admission fee, attests to the widespread interest in exhibition poultry at the time. Birds were judged by the point system—as evidenced by a twelve-pound Cochin cockerel “scoring 95 out of a possible 100 points”—and competed for silver cups or money sweepstakes. The article fails to give the total number of birds exhibited, but mentions or illustrates the following breeds as being represented: Red-Pyle Games (standard and bantam), Frizzles, Rumpless, Plymouth Rocks, Cochins, Brahmins (Brahmas), Leghorns, Spanish, Houdans, Polish, and Silver-laced Bantams (Sebrights). Also on display were pigeons—English Carriers, Pouters, Jacobins, Nuns, Crested Fantails, Tumblers, Turbits—doves, and rabbits.

## THE 1884 SHOW

The following year, the show was doubled in length to eight days, January 23-30, and dubbed the “Madison Square Garden Exhibition of the New York Fancier’s Club” by *The Poultry World* (13). The journal defers full coverage of the show to “not only the poultry papers but the newspapers and prominent illustrated papers of the day” which have “given the public good accounts of the proceedings” but does offer a beautifully detailed engraving of the exhibition. The show coops consisted of dowel-fronted wooden coops with solid tops, bottoms, backs, sides, and partitions (similar to the coffin-sized Pullman coops used by stringmen a few years later) set up waist-high on cloth-skirted sawhorses in at least a dozen single rows up and down the arena. Most holes housed two, sometimes more, birds and each hole bore an identification/judging card above the door. Being January in New York, it’s not surprising that the patrons depicted in the engraving are all wearing hats and overcoats and the tops of the coops appear to be covered with cloth, possibly canvas. Remember, this, the first Madison Square Garden, was roofless over the arena, although sometimes tenting material protected the birds from the weather. It is unclear from the engraving whether such a covering was in place for the poultry show.

## THE 1885 SHOW

The New York Fancier’s Club held its third show in Madison Square Garden February 4-11, 1885. That month’s issue of *The Poultry Keeper* announced “The Great Show at Madison Garden” and the show managers’ efforts to make it “the grandest show ever held in the East.” Further, it proclaimed: “Breeders! Carry your birds to the Madison Garden Show. The expense is as nothing compared with the honors to be gained.” Apparently, winning at Madison Square Garden was already regarded as a significant

accomplishment. The announcement also informs us of how judging was conducted: “An excellent feature [of the show] will be the bringing of the birds to the judges to be scored . . . .” Were the birds cooped on the show floor—by class or by exhibitor? Who carried the birds to the judges?

An article in the *The American Poultry Yard* hints at the precarious financial nature of the early Garden poultry shows (14). In previously published columns, the *Yard* informed its readers “Mr. Charles J. Quinby was the Madison Garden Show. He engineered it and gave it most of whatever *moral* standing and pecuniary backing it had.” Subsequently the *Yard* learned that Mr. Quinby would not be running the Garden show in 1886 and therefore urged its readers—who were questioning “whether or no the bottom had all fallen out of the New York Show” not to attend. In the January article, the *Yard* backed off slightly on that advice, stating that now it did “not unreservedly advise fanciers to exhibit.” The *Yard*, it seems, was attempting to protect potential exhibitors: “When the exhibitors are through this year they will know whether they are satisfied or not, and they will know whether they receive the cash prizes awarded or not.” The article goes on to warn there are “good grounds for suspicion that, if bad weather or other disaster should affect the finances, exhibitors would suffer.” Is this suggesting that the financial success of the show depended heavily on public admission? It was, after all, Madison Square Garden.

## THE 1886 SHOW

Despite the controversy over the Fancier’s Club’s politics, the 1886 show went on as scheduled February 3-10 and was apparently a grand success under the Club’s new president, Mr. Long.

*The American Poultry Yard* published a detailed account of the exhibition over several issues in 1886, including a special supplement. The authors have

been able to locate only some of these issues and, thus, the following account is incomplete. We do, however, offer an overview of the classes on display with specific quotations of interest that reveal the popularity of different breeds and varieties at the time and that give insight into some of the characteristics of the birds that challenged breeders back then—as perhaps they still do today. It is worth reminding the reader once again that this show took place over 120 years ago.

In the “large” Asiatic class, the Dark Brahmas “were not so numerous as their lighter cousins, but sixty-six birds make a good display.” The reviewer mentions numerous imperfect pea combs among the Light Brahmas and good pencilings among the Darks but many with a “ruddy tunge, a very common fault of the variety.”

In Cochins, there were 28 blacks, 18 whites, 62 partridge (“hardly as many . . . as one would have expected from the great popularity of the breed”), and an undisclosed number of buffs. Interestingly, the reviewer remarks on the high quality of the blacks and whites “sufficient to repel the charge so constantly made by English judges that good Cochins were not to be had among the Blacks and Whites.” Two pairs of Pea-comb Partridge Cochins were shown and the reviewer laments “When no more people breed it than now it seems hardly worth while to have it in the *Standard*.”

Twelve exhibitors showed 89 Black Langshans—“a very popular breed.” The exhibit was “a credible one although many of the birds were disqualified” for “a touch of white” on one or two toe feathers. Among the competitors there were those that professed that “he was a *Standard* man and believed in the *Standard*” and thereby agreed with the judge’s decision to disqualify while others claimed less sympathy to the *Standard*’s rules especially when a 94-point bird had to be disqualified for “a trifling speck of white.”

The American Dominique whose “merits have been somewhat obscured by the great popularity achieved by their near relatives, the Plymouth Rocks” were represented by 37 birds “not quite so perfect in combs as we should like to have seen them.”

“The Wyandottes made the largest exhibit in the show”. The reviewer gives considerable space to the premise that although the birds shown were of “excellent quality,” that “if, as we believe, the ideal plumage of the Wyandotte is that of the Silver Sebright bantam, the bird is a long way from perfection” owing to the fact most Wyandottes of the day are “exceedingly dark in the back.”

Plymouth Rocks were second in abundance to Wyandottes, with the reviewer stating “there were more very large Rocks at this show than in any other exhibition ever held.” Although a “fine class,” there was “one point that the Plymouth Rocks as a class failed in. They were slightly too long in the back.” The reviewer suggested breeders strive for a “golden mean, something between the short Cochins and the long Dorking back.”

Black and Mottled Javas “were not a large exhibit . . . they have not yet succeeded in gaining such a hold upon public esteem as their admirers believe them entitled to.”

Malays, too, were small in number and “not so large as one could wish them to have been.” The reviewer encourages “an importation of a few good birds” as “there is no fowl that responds more quickly to judicious out-breeding than this variety.”

Games were present in black red, brown reds, yellow and silver duckwings, red pile, white and black with many “fine in station and exquisite in color, with a hardness and glossiness of feather for which the Game is noted.”

“With all the popularity of the varieties in the Asiatic and American classes, the Hamburgs managed to hold their own exceedingly well in the midst of so



much rivalry, for they unite with great prolificacy a wonderful beauty, a union which keeps alive a host of enthusiastic admirers." There was a "fairly good exhibition" of silver spangled, silver and golden penciled, and blacks but no whites and only one pen of golden spangled.

One pair of Black Sumatras were on exhibit and although "they were more beautiful than any picture of them we ever sat . . . the living luster of their plumage was wanting." Similarly, only one pair and one pen of Andalusians were shown, indicative of the fact that "in England it has a much greater popularity than here."

"The White Leghorns were a large and fine class, although in combs, as usual, there was much to be desired. The combs of the single-combed birds were as a rule too large, while in the rose-combed birds they would not be inaptly described as 'a tangle of red worsted.'"

It was in the judging of the Leghorns that an issue was raised, then as now: "birds cut on size for being too large. For years there has been a cry that the Leghorns were too small. It does very well to cut Bantams for being too large, but we have always thought that in other varieties, the larger the bird, the better, other things being equal. If increase of size destroys the symmetry, cut for symmetry, but if not, why should not a quality which indicates vigor, good constitution and usefulness be favored, not frowned upon?"

Squirrel-tail was also a problem among the Leghorns to the degree that some birds "stood up so straight that they leaned backward."

Brown Leghorns in both single and rose-combed varieties were second in abundance to the whites and suffered the same imperfections of the comb. Only one pair and one pen of Dominique Leghorns were shown and no blacks.

"The Polish made a very fair exhibit and the quality was good." Varieties shown included white-crested black, bearded silver, golden, and white.

“The Dorking class was filled, all three varieties, colored, silver gray, and white” but specimens were “hardly up in size.”

“The French class was represented by a fine exhibition of Houdans, very rich in color and of good size; and by the Crevecoeurs which were small” and “in need of new blood if they hope to maintain their ground.” There were no La Fletch “the Black Spanish of France,” which was not surprising as “there are but few specimens” in this country owing to their reputation of “not being hardy.”

“The Game Bantam class was quite a large one, although there were but one pair of Brown Reds and one pair of Whites and no Blacks. The Black-Breasted reds were fine, in color and station, and the Duckwings, both Yellow and Silver, showed some birds free from the black stripe in the hackle, which is one of the commonest faults of this class.” Red Piles were “out in good numbers” but “for some unexplained reason [they seem] less likely to be short in the leg and neck and generally dumpy in figure than any other variety of Game Bantam.”

Silver Sebrights outnumbered the goldens “and were especially noticeable for the perfect character of the lacings and the sharp contrast between the white centers and the clear black edging.”

The reviewer goes into some detail discussing the White-crested White Polish bantams on display, particularly with reference to the *single* comb of the males which were “too prominent and divided the crests too much. It is our opinion that, while the breeders of this bantam deserve great praise for developing so beautiful a variety, and especially increasing in size the crests to so great a degree as they have in the past few years, there is much to be done yet. If the single comb can be got rid of, by crossing in a White Polish cock and then breeding back to diminish the size which would probably be increased by making the cross, we think such a cross would be very desirable. At any rate the single combs, especially of the cocks, should be decreased in size, or what is far

better, gotten rid of entirely, as has been the case with the V combs of the best specimens of the large Polish.”

“There was a good exhibition of Rose-comb Black Bantams” but only one pair of Rose-comb Whites. There were 28 Pekin bantams, mostly buff, with males being “much darker than the females” and one pair of Red Mottled Pekins.

“The Japanese Bantams were very good specimens of that little coxcombical, impudent, conceited, white plumaged, single combed, black tailed foreigner, which we have received from the wonderful people of that island empire of the East. There was not a large exhibit, for this variety, as well as the ‘heathen Chinees,’ the Pekin, is as yet quite rare. The high prices, also, at which the Japs and the Pekins have been held, have prevented very many from breeding them who may fancy and will own them when lower prices rule.”

In the Miscellaneous class, were “a number of fowls . . . named ‘American Snowflakes,’” which had a “general Plymouth Rock symmetry, of about the same size, single combs, yellow legs, red earlobes, and pure white plumage.” Also in the class were “the old claimants for *Standard* recognition,” the Jersey Blues; Russians, “bearded like a pard”; Minorcas [apparently still rare in this country], “three distinct types” of Erminettes—feather-legged and single combed, rose combed smooth-legged, and pea-combed smooth legged, and one pair of snowy white Rumpless “as perfect a pair . . . as we ever saw, especially perfect in comb and symmetry.”

Finally among the chickens exhibited were the Pit Games about which the reviewer states, “We are not and never have been in sympathy with cock-fighting, (for it is to be classed with breeding in-and-in, with cattle raising on wild range, driving lame horses, and other forms of cruelty), and so cannot be expected to show any great interest in their fighting properties, but some of the Games are worthy of preservation for domestic uses and exhibition purposes.”

Turkeys were represented by “all Bronze, except one pair of Whites” and “met with a ready sale, some having been disposed of for shipment to England.” The Madison Square Garden Show was apparently already an international sales venue for top quality stock.

Listed in the review between turkeys and peafowl is the “ornamental fowl” that included one pair of Japanese Phoenix fowl.

Shown were two pair of peacocks, Golden and Silver pheasants, and likely other varieties of pheasants as well.

Twelve pairs of geese were on exhibit (breeds and varieties not given) as well as 47 pairs and one pen of ducks that included Pekins, Aylesburys, Cayugas, Rouens, Wood Ducks, Kanackas, Calls, Cresteds, and Muscovies. “The interest in duck raising has greatly increased with a few years, and will show a much greater increase for the year to come.”

Pigeons were already a regular part of most poultry shows including this Madison Square Garden show, where the largest exhibitor showed a whopping 66 pairs of fantails, 109 pairs of owls, and 38 pairs of Tumblers for a total of 426 birds!

“Always an interesting side show to a poultry exhibition “ were the exhibits of “cats and miscellaneous pets” that included: one white and one pair of Gray Squirrels, and one jet black; one coon; one maltese and one tortoise shell Angora cat; one pair of Egyptian and one pair of Angora rabbits; pair of white and pair of Abyssinian Guinea pigs; white and other colored rats; ferrets; canary bird; Paroquet and Indigo Finch.” The reviewer speculates, “rabbit breeding . . . has received little encouragement in this country...it is a wonder that our people have not taken more kindly to them. It may well be that we shall get infected with the fever sometime, but two pairs of rabbits at *our greatest poultry and pet stock exhibition* [emphasis by the authors] don’t look very dangerous for the present.”

Other than a brief mention that the “bench show was fine,” with an “especially good” exhibition of Mastiff and St. Bernards, the authors have been unable to locate the subsequent issues of *The American Poultry Yard* that would likely have reviewed the “poultry appliances” on exhibit as well as possibly other classes including eggs, dressed fowl, and the like that we will see in the 1890 exhibition.

## **THE 1887 SHOW**

The next poultry show in the Garden was held December 14-21, 1887. The almost two-year hiatus between shows may have been because a wall collapsed in the Garden earlier in the year. An advertisement in *The Poultry World* called the 1887 show “THE NEW YORK SHOW at Madison Square Garden” and included subheadings for “Poultry, Pigeons, Toy Dogs, Cats, and Pets” (15).

## **1888 & 1889**

As far as the authors have determined, there was no poultry show at Madison Square Garden in 1888 or 1889.

## **THE “OFFICIAL” MADISON SQUARE GARDEN POULTRY SHOW, Madison Square Garden II & III, 1890-1949/50**

### **SHOW NAMES AND SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS**

The New York Fancier's Club created and sponsored the first poultry show in Madison Square Garden I in 1883 as well as the shows there in 1884, 1885, 1886, and 1887. By the time of the next major New York City show in 1890—and

the first of what collectively would become officially known as *the* Madison Square Garden Poultry Show—the sponsor was the New York Poultry and Pigeon Association, (Limited). Ironically, this first “official” Madison Square Garden Poultry Show was not held in Madison Square Garden (Madison Square Garden II was still under construction) but in the American Institutes Building. The officers of the New York Poultry and Pigeon Association, (Limited), were not the previous officers of the New York Fancier's Club which apparently no longer even existed.

The New York Poultry and Pigeon Association, (Limited), continued to run the Garden show under that name until sometime between 1900 and 1903 when the organization changed its name to the New York Poultry, Pigeon and Pet Stock Association, (Limited).

Although “pet stock”—from fish to squirrels, eagles to cats, rabbits to dogs—regularly had been included in Garden and other poultry shows, their breeders and exhibitors had heretofore only ridden the appellative coattails of poultry—sometimes pigeon—organizations. One might suspect that the name change of the New York organization reflected the strong political influence of New York breeders within the organization.

By the 1912-13 Garden show, the association dropped “Pet Stock” from its title and changed its name back to the New York Poultry and Pigeon Association, (Limited) and the show itself carried the rather lengthy title of: “Madison Square Garden ‘America’s Leading Show’ Under the Auspices of New York Poultry & Pigeon Ass’n (Limited).” Name change notwithstanding, this show continued to offer competitive classes of rabbits, covies, canaries and cage birds, and mice, as well as displays of “Ornamental and Rare Birds.”

In 1920, the organization changed the show title from “America’s Leading Show” to “The World’s Leading Show,” and in 1921, after another organizational

name change, the show was called “Madison Square Garden ‘The World’s Leading Show’ Under the Auspices of Madison Square Garden Poultry Show Incorporated.” Finally, in 1923 and throughout its remaining history the organization and the show together became the “Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc.,” The 1945/46 show received the additional unofficial title of the “Victory Year Show.”

The above names are those used on the official show *Premium Lists* and *Catalogues*. The poultry literature and non-poultry press of the times, however, were less stringent in their use of the official names and often referred to the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show as “The Garden Show,” “The Madison Square Show,” “The New York Show,” “The New York Poultry Show,” or “The Great New York Show.” To confuse matters even more, there was indeed another New York City poultry show called the “New York Poultry Show, Incorporated” which ran from 1932 into the 1953. There was also “The Palace Show” that used the tagline “The Remarkable Show of New York City,” which ran for an unknown duration from at least the early 1900s.

## **SHOW DATES AND LENGTH**

The poultry show at Madison Square Garden was held in December (beginning as early as the 10<sup>th</sup>), January, or February (ending as late as the 25<sup>th</sup>). At least ten different shows began immediately after Christmas and spanned New Year’s Eve. Most shows held in Garden I ran for eight days, though the 1883 show ran for only four. There were at least two other four-day shows: 1895, and in the war years of 1943/44. By the turn of the century, the show usually ran for five days, increasing to six days during the 1910s, and dropping back down to five days thereafter. Six-day shows usually ran from

Friday to Wednesday; five-day shows through 1921 ran from Tuesday through Saturday and thereafter from Wednesday through Sunday.

## THE EXHIBITORS

Perhaps more than anything else, what made the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show the greatest show in America were its exhibitors. Location, show management, publicity, premiums and awards, all added to the Garden show's success and reputation, but it was the superior quality of the birds entered into competition that distinguished the Garden from all other shows and that exceptional quality was ultimately the work of America's best breeders/exhibitors.

The heyday of the Garden show corresponded to the heyday of the fancy (early 1900s-1920s), when master breeders of established breeds and varieties brought their birds to levels of perfection the *Standard* had long called for but had yet to be seen on the showroom floor. The presence of these exemplars of excellence together with their creators made the Garden Show a living showcase of the *Standard of Perfection* and a unique classroom for learning the art of breeding and exhibiting exhibition poultry.

"The men who know quality and whose opinions advance and remake standards are here. The young breeder who aspires to reach the top should be willing to sacrifice much to seek their company. Their criticisms are kindly and the vision of the young breeder is quickly and widely broadened" (16).

"It will pay you well to meet the men whom you will find every year at the Garden—to visit with them, look over their birds in their company and get their ideas. This is always easy to do. They are a fraternal lot and ever ready to visit. This is one of the big benefits of the winter poultry show—for earnest breeders and friends of poultry culture to GET TOGETHER, become better acquainted and exchange helpful opinions" (17).



“Judges and exhibitors throughout this country should visit this show regularly to obtain information at first hand and see for themselves how close to *Standard* requirements the different varieties of poultry can be bred. They will find nearly every variety listed in the *Standard* exhibited here and shown in a condition in which the state of excellence cannot be moved ahead much more. Exhibitors at this show are as keen as the judges themselves and they are so familiar with their breed, that the greatest uniformity in type prevails. Therefore a fifth prize bird at the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show may be practically the equal in type to the first prize winner and the judge will have to make his decision on condition only” (18).

The atmosphere of the Garden show as a learning center for exhibition poultry is further illustrated by an extraordinary gesture of the show’s management. In 1923, it selected from numerous applicants, three “young judges” to come to the Garden show, at the management’s expense, to help other “seasoned” judges, study the winners, and write reviews of the classes. The judges were intentionally selected from the “distant” states of South Carolina, Mississippi, and Kansas as it was thought they would benefit most from seeing first hand the quality of birds at the Garden. Upon viewing the Garden entries of his preferred breed, one of these young judges remarked, “I didn’t know such quality existed.”

“That was the idea in bringing these young judges to New York, i.e., to give them an intimate personal knowledge of the kind of birds that win at New York, to give them a sort of post-graduate course in *Standard* exhibition poultry. They now go out as members of the Garden alumni, as men whose higher education has been obtained in this great school of learning. They go as missionaries to their respective districts of the country to propagate the high ideals of America’s best breeders. And in departing they take with them the

aspirations and dreams that issue forth from the enchantment of the old Garden. It is here that the best work of the master breeders of America is on display, and in it is to be found the true source of inspiration” (19).

During the fancy’s heyday, poultry breeders also were creating new breeds and varieties faster than ever before. Many of these newcomers were readily recognized by the APA, as evidenced by the expanding pages of each new *Standard*, and the Garden show provided the paramount forum for their presentation to the world. “We want these varieties because we know it will help the breeders and will be an added attraction to our show. We want to make ‘the Garden Show’ greater and this can be done by adding worthy varieties . . . . We are therefore appealing to you, asking that your variety is yearly represented in the “Hall of Fame” (20).

Because of its unmatched reputation for quality entries, the Garden show served as judge and jury of a breeder’s reputation and in that rested his pride . . . and sometimes his fortune. “The interested public today places so high an estimate of value on the awards at the Garden show that a winning or defeat at New York is of first importance in establishing a breeder as a first, second, or third rater; and the types that win at New York not only exert a wide influence on the ideals of breeders and judges, but the winning birds are accepted by the public as living representatives of the highest quality obtainable in choice Standardbred fowls” (21).

Most of the Garden exhibitor-breeders were one-man hobbyists, specializing in one or a few breeds or varieties. However, as interest in the fancy grew, exhibition poultry also became a business and for some, a big business. Huge farms, breeding anywhere from a few popular breeds and varieties to more than a hundred, were in the business of selling eggs, chicks, and stock. Sales—on the farm, through catalogs, and at the shows—were dependent on the farm’s

reputation, which in turn, was dependent on its show record. No show record, of course, spoke to sales like that from the Garden.

Although the exhibitor listings always named the farm or the farm owner as the exhibitor of record, many large farms employed a manager or superintendent who was responsible for the breeding, conditioning, grooming, and training for competition of the owner's birds. At one time or another, many of the great exhibition poultrymen served in this capacity. In a full-page ad in the *American Poultry Journal*, Mr. A. C. Robertson, owner of Robadel Poultry Farm, Cos Cob, CT, paid tribute to his Manager under the banner heading "DEMONSTRATION OF ABILITY. My recent win of Best Display at Madison Square Garden, January 20 to 24, 1920, in S. C. White Orpingtons is additional evidence of the ability of Mr. Charles Hubbard as one of the world's leading expert poultrymen" (22). The ad also hawked "Hubbard's Poultry Secrets, a book full of horse sense," for \$2 per copy!

To meet the growing needs of these large farms for workers as well as to meet the needs of individuals looking for experience in the breeding and management of exhibition poultry, especially during the boom years of the early 1920s, the Madison Square Garden Show management established the Garden Service Bureau, whose purpose was "to bring [these] parties together." What an extraordinary service of a poultry show! The extreme demand, both for work and workers, attests to the extraordinary interest in exhibition poultry across the country.

Garden exhibitors also included many of the great stringmen who were excellent breeders as well as showmen. For a man whose livelihood required him to be a bankable judge of all classes of poultry, there was no better place than the Garden for the stringman to hone his craft. While most stringmen probably showed relatively few birds of their favorite breeds and varieties, some did show

scores of birds, as revealed in an article by Chas. Hubbard (Manager, Robadel Poultry Farm) entitled “Conditioning Birds for Exhibition”: “The labor in connection with showing a string such as I did in Madison Square Garden last year, numbering 197 birds, all of which I conditioned myself represents considerable work . . .” (23). Mr. Hubbard’s nearly 200 entries were confined to Orpingtons and Minorcas and his entry fees totaled more than \$4000 in today’s money! Despite his winnings, the prize money fell far short of covering his expenses although one might suspect his primary motivation was in fostering sales.

Women were also regular exhibitors at Madison Square Garden, as far back as 1892, when at least six women were in the exhibitor’s list, showing, collectively, standard Wyandottes, Jersey Blues, Hamburgs, Houdans, Pekin bantams, and eggs. Into the show’s heyday, women continued to exhibit under their own names, even though at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three quarters of all 45 states forbade married women to hold property in their own name! In its review of the 1906 show, *Poultry* paid special recognition to at least one young and promising female exhibitor by publishing a photograph of Miss Sophia Pitchlynn of Washington, D.C., with the comment, “the Indian girl exhibitor of Single Comb Brown Leghorns, is one of the most enthusiastic fanciers in the country and will make her mark in the shows before many years shall have passed” (24). The photo depicted Miss Pitchlynn in traditional native American dress, complete with a single white feather adorning her long braided hair. As marital property rights changed and nationwide female suffrage became law, women sometimes took center stage in the world of exhibition poultry, viz., a full-page advertisement in the *Official 1943/44 Garden Show Catalogue*, showing Mrs. J. J. Bower - “Breeder of Dark Cornish.”

Since the late 1920s, after the 4-H program reorganized and formally adopted its name, 4-H exhibitors annually attended the Garden Show. In some

years' show catalogs, it is clear that 4-H members had their own classes; while other years' catalogs make no distinction between open and 4-H classes and do not list 4-H exhibitors separately. In 1930, "there were several [4-H] judging teams present and working for a prize (25). In 1947, Jack Carey won the Grand Championship of these 4-H classes on a New Hampshire pullet and was awarded a \$100.00 watch as a prize" (26).

A surprising exhibitor at the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show was announced by the show's Secretary and Superintendent in the August 1917 issue of the *American Poultry Journal*: "The United States Government will have an exhibit with us this year and possibly may show some of its poultry, but in any event its moving picture reels will daily be on exhibition." What branch of the government exhibited poultry and what breeds and varieties might it have shown? For whatever reason, the U.S. Government per se, never appeared in a list of exhibitors.

Throughout much of the six-decade run of the Garden show, most exhibitors came by train. As train routes and schedules expanded at the end of the 19th century, speed, safety, and comfort improved as well. Even the price of a ticket became something the average person could easily afford. Trains were the lifeblood of the Madison Square Garden Show, both for exhibitors taking their birds in hand and for birds shipped in express while their owner remained at home. Sending birds express freight to the Garden show was an easy and inexpensive endeavor. An absentee exhibitor could take his crate of entrants to his local train station, pay the modest freight charge, and rest assured that his birds would be well cared for en route, at the show, and on their return, as revealed in this letter to General Manager of the show, Lincoln Orr: "Dear Sir— First and Second B. P. Rock Hens arrive home in fine shape. One began laying

next day after arrival. You certainly look after entries properly. Yours respectfully,  
WILLIAM HAYNER, Village Farm" (27).

While express charges were more than reasonable, shipping coops were downright cheap, as revealed in a full-page ad of The Otselic Manufacturing Company in the 1909-10 Garden *Premium List*. Describing their coops built for sending birds to shows: "These coops are built of No. 1 three-eight white pine, every joint tongued and grooved, top hinged and fastened with hasp and swivel fastener, or staple to use pad-lock with, either way you may wish. Shipped nailed up and painted two coats of best oil paint." The ad listed ten sizes of coops available: the smallest, 10" x 12" x 10", cost 23¢ each and the largest, 24" x 24" x 24", ran a whopping 68¢ a piece! (In 1910, Coca-Cola sold for 5¢ and a Robert Burns cigar for 10¢.)

While most birds went to the Garden by train, in 1927 [sic1926], Harry Kettle of Dallas, Texas, was the first to *fly* a chicken (S. C. Black Minorca cock) in for the show (28). Despite its lofty arrival, Mr. Kettle's bird failed to place in a class of seven.

Hotels near Madison Square Garden catered to poultry exhibitors and regularly advertised in the show's premium list and catalog. In 1903, the Ashland House offered rooms with board for \$2.50 and \$3.00 per day, rooms without board for \$1.00 and up. Its "first-class Restaurant, second to none in the city" offered breakfast for 75¢, lunch for 50¢, and dinner for \$1.00. In 1909-10, the same hotel advertised "single rooms heated without charge," and offered rooms with bath for \$3.00 to \$3.50 per day. Curiously, its restaurant, now billed as enjoying "a world wide reputation" lowered the cost of dinner to 75¢. The Broztell was the official hotel of the 1913 show, offering all rooms with bath for \$2.00 to \$3.00 with "an additional rate of \$1.00 per day . . . where two occupy the same room." Located near Madison Square Garden III was the Hotel Manger, the

Poultrymen's Headquarters for 1928. Its ad in the 1928 Catalogue noted that "grouped about the hotel are the largest *legitimate* [emphasis added], vaudeville and motion picture theatres. It offered rooms for \$2.50-\$3.00, rooms with shower bath for \$3.00-\$3.50, and rooms with private bath and shower for \$3.50-\$4.00 noting that "all rooms have hot and cold running water, circulating ice water and Servidors. The Hotel Manger was the "Official Headquarters for the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show" in the Depression year of 1931 when it reduced its former rates by 50¢ per room.

As the reputation of the Garden show grew, so did the geographic base of its exhibitors. As early as 1892, the Garden show drew exhibitors from 13 states, though most came from New York and nearby New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. By the end of the first decade of the 1900s and continuing each year until the show's end, exhibitors consistently hailed from more than half of the Union's then forty-eight states including, most frequently, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin; Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas; Alabama, Georgia, Florida, New Mexico, Colorado, and even California. In 1892, there was one exhibitor from England. By 1913, the number had grown to six and entrants from the British Isles continued regularly into the early 1920s. Whether brought over by the owner himself or shipped as freight, just getting the bird across the Atlantic was a costly endeavor and one, we might assume, that seriously challenged the health and condition of the entrants. Still, for the Madison Square Garden show, they came. When British entries eventually fell off, due to post-war economics, Canadian entries picked up the slack. Canadian exhibitors continued showing annually through the last Garden exhibition.

That exhibitors faithfully trekked across town, across state, and across country in an era when transportation was substantially more arduous and comparatively more expensive than it is today, combined with the cost of pricey

entry fees, accommodations, meals, and local transportation—all for a multi-day show—is testimony to the alluring grandeur of the Madison Square Garden show. But what is truly remarkable is that exhibitors did it by the hundreds, year after year, over six decades, and all too frequently against the more than challenging backdrop of American history.

While still in its infancy, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show faced its first economic challenge from the devastating Panic of 1893, when 8,000 American businesses collapsed within six months, railroads went bankrupt, farm prices plummeted, unemployment soared, and soup kitchens and hobo camps became commonplace. The depression of 1893 lasted four years, yet Garden exhibitors kept coming. In 1899, 402 exhibitors showed poultry, pigeons, rabbits, and equipment. In 1903, the number grew slightly to 417 exhibitors, including those showing cats. In 1908-09, exhibitor numbers soared to 639 for just poultry, pigeons, and rabbits. In 1913, on the cusp of another economic depression and with war looming in Europe, a record 717 exhibitors made it to the Garden. The short-lived depression that followed quickly gave way to unprecedented prosperity as war orders for American goods poured in from overseas. But soon the Garden show faced a new threat, human disease, and this would not be the only time in the history of the show when it would do so. In 1916, a national outbreak of polio claimed 27,000 victims, 6,000 of whom died. New York City recorded 8,900 cases of the disease with 2,400 deaths. Although most victims were under five years old, panic affected everyone. Many public gatherings were canceled and children under 16 were banned from public places. Victims were quarantined, and passes were required for travel. Despite the circumstances, 695 exhibitors showed poultry and pigeons at the 1916-17 Garden show.

Garden exhibitor numbers soon faced another challenge as America entered the war in Europe. In 1917, the US Army grew from 200,000 men to over



4 million, while millions more Americans abandoned life as they knew it and put their time, money, and energy into the war effort. If this wasn't enough of at least a potential threat to a sustainable poultry show in the Garden, a more menacing peril quickly emerged, Spanish Influenza, the worst epidemic to plague America anytime before or since. This time, not just children succumbed. Frequently strong, robust men, ages 21-29, fell victim. The first influenza death in New York City occurred on September 15, 1918. In the 31 days of October, 195,000 Americans died; within 10 months, the number had climbed to more than 550,000. In New York City, the death toll reached 33,000 and "that underestimated the number considerably" (29). During 1919, the death rate tapered off dramatically but in early 1920, Influenza returned with a vengeance when, in New York City, more cases were reported on a single day than on any day in 1918. And then, as quickly as it came, it went away.

Throughout the war and the deadly epidemic, poultry and pigeon exhibitors continued to fill Madison Square Garden: 584 in 1917-18 (which was also the coldest winter on record), 518 in 1919, and 598 in 1920. In 1922, amidst the post-war depression, the Garden still hosted 558 exhibitors of poultry alone. One might make a case for the exhibition of poultry as a tonic for the beleaguered soul.

It was clear that if any outside force was to significantly decrease the number of exhibitors at America's greatest poultry show it would have to be something greater than war or disease. That something began on "Black Tuesday," September 29, 1929, and continued as the Great Depression. In 1931, exhibitor numbers for poultry alone dropped to 398. The prospect for even fewer entries in 1932 together with an equally bleak prospect of improved economic conditions for the country in general, forced the great show at Madison Square Garden to close its doors. The gradual recovery out of the depression from 1933

to 1937 was followed by a sharp recession in 1938, when, on the horizon, loomed another world war. It was not until the winter of 1943, with American forces fighting two wars on opposite sides of the globe that the Garden show was resurrected from its financial, and probably administrative, insecurities. That year, poultry exhibitors numbered 441, inclusive of duplicate exhibitors in large fowl, bantams, waterfowl, turkeys, and sales/display classes. The number increased to 492 the following year. Total poultry exhibitors reached 562 in 1945-46, 559 in 1946, 480 in 1947, and 473 in 1948-49 (poultry and rabbits). All in all, not a bad comeback. But in 1949-50, the number of combined poultry and rabbit exhibitors fell to 350—the lowest number since the earliest years of the show. Such low numbers undermined the show's financial stability. On New Year's Day, 1950, exhibitors cooped out of the Garden for the last time.

Over the years, several thousand poultry exhibitors made the pilgrimage to Madison Square Garden. As with exhibitors attending shows today, they were a varied lot of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, savvy poultrymen and novice hobbyists, urban sophisticates and rural men of the land. Many exhibitors were prominent within the larger poultry community as national association and breed club officers, poultry judges, artists, authors, book and journal editors and publishers, science professors, supplies manufacturers and dealers, etc. Whoever they were and from wherever they came, they all had one thing in common: a love of exhibition poultry and the experience of attending the greatest poultry show in American history.

One can only imagine what it must have been like for some of these exhibitors to attend such a show in one of the greatest cities in the world. It must have been a magical, eye-popping experience. While interviewing Garden exhibitors for this article, one old timer recounted going to the show as a young boy with his uncle. They took the train from their small hometown in upstate New

York. It was the boy's first visit to the, or any, big city. He recalled how absolutely mystified he was that, upon walking back from the Garden to their hotel one night, all of the storefront windows were boarded up as tight as a coffin. Never before had he seen such a thing but accepted it as the way things were done in a big city like New York. The next day he realized it was only a one-night precaution—against the revelers of New Year's Eve!

## **RULES & REGULATIONS**

One of the most enlightening portholes into the changing issues confronting the management of the Garden show is the Rules & Regulations section of the premium lists. Unfortunately, premium lists, especially from the early years, are an extremely rare find today. We have reviewed three premium lists from 1900s-1910s, five from the 1920s, and five from the 1940s.

In the show's early years, premium lists contained two sets of rules: the rules of the American Poultry Association, under whose sanction the show was held, and the rules of the show's sponsoring local organization. With regard to the latter's rules, one of the APA's rules stated, "The printed regulations or rules of this show, where they are not less stringent than, or where they do not conflict with, the foregoing, shall be binding on the exhibitors and judges and supplemental to the American Poultry Association rules." Clearly, the APA had the upper hand in the governing rules of the show. By 1920 and continuing thereafter, premium lists contained only one "general" set of rules.

The APA's roughly twenty regulating rules focused on one primary issue: fraudulent practices. Exhibitors who were already under disqualification by the APA for fraudulent practices were not allowed to show and the rules prescribed the consequences for anyone found in violation. For the current show, fraudulent practices included showing a bird one did not own, "every bird entered for

competition must be the bona fide property of the exhibitor,” “showing a bird that has been owned by or in possession of the judge assigned to the class within six months prior to the close of the entries,” and “collusion”—apparently either between exhibitors or between an exhibitor and judge. Rules set forth the consequences of disqualification for infractions—loss of entry fees and premiums, removal of birds from the showroom, etc.— and also means of appeal. The APA rules in the premium list did not specifically mention faking as a fraudulent practice, but faking and the consequences thereof were covered in the “To The Poultry Associations of America” section of the latest *Standard* under whose sanction the show was proclaimed to be governed.

The 1909/10 Garden show’s sponsoring organization’s (New York Poultry, Pigeon and Pet Stock Association) rules upped the ante for fraudulent practices by offering a bounty of \$10.00 (equivalent to almost \$200 today) “to any person who will furnish information that will convict an exhibitor of showing a borrowed or faked bird at this show.” One can only assume that such fraudulent conduct at the Garden shows of the 1890s and early 1900s created the need for such severe rules by 1910.

Four APA rules pertained specifically to judges: 1) “The judges shall be required personally to place, or superintend the placing of all prize ribbons or prize cards on the coops of the winning specimens.” 2) “No judge of poultry at this show shall exhibit in any class he is assigned to pass upon.” 3) “The judges at the show shall record the names of the winners in specially prepared blanks.” 4) “The instructions to judges . . . [in] the *American Standard of Perfection* shall govern this show.”

Also common in the show’s early years was the NYPP&PSA Rule #6: “The Association will be pleased to undertake the sale of birds for exhibitors, free of charge. To facilitate and assist this project, the selling price must be stated in the

catalogue.” By 1920, however, Rule #6 read, “The Association will not undertake the sale of any of the exhibits.” Imagine the headaches that led to this rule’s reversal!

Sponsoring organization rules always contained information about admission to the show. From 1909/10 through 1920, “Season tickets will be issued to all exhibitors whose entry fees amount to \$5. Single admission tickets, 50 cents; tickets for children under fifteen years of age, 25 cents.” In 1921, it read simply, “Season Tickets will be issued free of charge to all exhibitors.” In 1924, “One Season Ticket will be sent to each exhibitor. Extra tickets will be sent exhibitors whose entry fees warrant it, . . .” And from 1926 through the last show in 1949/50, “One Season Ticket will be sent to each exhibitor whose entry fees are not less than \$3.00.”

By 1920, the general rules and regulations gave fair warning that “Space is limited in the Garden” and that “Those [entries] arriving late may have to be returned owing to lack of space.” The 1920 rules also decreed that, “No exhibitor or his agent will be allowed to remove or otherwise handle any birds of a class that is being judged” and that “All specimens must be exhibited in their natural condition, with the exception of Games and Game Bantams. Any violations of this rule shall exclude such specimens from competition, and cause the withholding of all premiums awarded.”

Concessionists (those selling poultry supplies, journal subscriptions, etc.) were the target of two new rules in 1921. The first warned them not to “pack up before 10:30 P.M. of the last night. A whistle will be blown at that hour and until then nothing must be touched. The breaking of this rule will cause forfeiture of space for the next season.” The second was that “Concessionists will not be allowed to solicit except in their own booths. Any one soliciting on the floor will be

ordered back to their booth; if they have no booth, will be ordered out of the building.”

With total entries over 4,000 in the previous few years, another 1921 rule stated, “It is desirable for all specimens to have a leg band number . . . .” This cumbersome request disappeared from the rules by 1926. Because of the high number of entries, judges, too, were the targets of two new rules in 1921: 1) “Judges who are exhibitors must not leave their classes in order to find out what they have won; nor should they ask any one to find out for them. Their first duty is to judge the classes assigned to them.” 2) “Judges are requested not to converse too much with visitors, bystanders or exhibitors while judging. We have full confidence in our judges but interruptions consume time, and are liable to create wrong impressions in many who may not understand.” Such conversation notwithstanding, it is amusing to note that the *American Chicken Fancier* informed prospective exhibitors and judges alike that “judges at the upcoming Madison Square Garden Poultry Show can dine with whomsoever they please” (27).

New rules again made the pages of the 1922 *Premium List* (the rules having increased in number from 10 in 1909/10 to 40 in 1922). Regarding the quality of the show, Rule #36 stated, “The prestige of Madison Square Garden demands that all birds be shown in the best possible condition. Birds that are not clean may be rejected. Sending birds to a show in a dirty condition loses you business, hurts the breed and lowers the tone of the whole show.” Rule #38 was even a bit more intimidating, “One hundred dollars (\$100) will be paid for the arrest and conviction (which must carry a fine or prison sentence) of any person or persons stealing any live animal or bird belonging to an exhibitor of the Show, while in the custody of Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc.,” We assume the bounty was to be paid to an informant of the crime. In 1924, the rule read “a

suitable reward” rather than \$100 and was expanded to include “. . .or any one caught mutilating or in any way injuring or rendering unfit for competition or display while en route to this show.” *Mutilating?* Competition must have been fierce to warrant the need for such rules!

The ferocity of competition in these early 1920s years is further attested to by 1924’s Rule #5 dealing with both faking and weight. It states, in part, “Judges will be instructed to ignore any specimen that in their own estimation (without a doubt) shows evidence of being what is commonly called faked, or shown in other than natural condition. Legitimate conditioning, preparing, and training is endorsed and encouraged. Judges must not award prizes to specimens that are undersize no matter how well they show up otherwise. If in doubt specimens must be weighed. For vigor, stamina and reproduction birds should stand out strong and full grown. Judges must go by the *Standard*.”

Integrity again is at the heart of 1924’s new Rule #11, “No protest will be received as regards the placing of the awards. Exhibitors, however, who will make affidavit of collusion or crookedness by judges or exhibitors can file same together with a deposit of twenty-five dollars. . . .” and a re-defined Rule #16, “All exhibits for competition must be the bona-fide property of the exhibitor. If it can be proved that any specimen has been bought solely for the purpose of exhibiting with the proviso that it be re-sold to the original owner, or to him through other parties, the Board of Directors will render such sentence it deems necessary.” Showing at The Garden in the 1920s must have been something!

The Rules of 1924 also shed light on an apparently recurrent problem inside The Garden: the presence of birds not entered into competition. For years before 1924, there was a rule forbidding specimens inside the building “except those which have been duly entered on the books of the Association and whose entry fee and express charges have been paid.” Why such specimens were there

and why it was a problem is not clear, although they may have been backup show birds or sales birds and not subject to scrutiny regarding their health. However, to provide remedy for one possibility, show management expanded the rule in 1924 to include, "To provide for accident, loss or death of a specimen which has been entered, the management has decided to open a new department to be known as the Reserve Bird Department, at the following entry fees: Large Poultry, \$2.00 each; Waterfowl and Turkeys, \$1.50 each; Bantams, Pigeons and Pet Stock, \$1.00 each. Specimens found in the building not duly entered will be held by the management and can only be redeemed by the payment of the full entry fee for such specimens in the competitive classes." In essence, an exhibitor was paying an entry fee for a bird as backup to one entered in competition. Was this really necessary and effective? Apparently not as the Reserve Bird Department was gone by 1926 when discovered "illegal" birds could be redeemed for half, rather than the "full," entry fee.

Whereas the poultry show was always judged by the latest edition of the *American Standard of Perfection*, Rule #10 of the 1924 *Premium List* clarified the judging of breeds and varieties not recognized by the APA: "In case of breeds and varieties not described in the *American Standard of Perfection* (Latest Edition) or accepted by the American Poultry Association, the same will be judged by the Club Standard if furnished to the Secretary of the Show." The Rule went on to state, "The standard description of Barred Plymouth Rocks only will be considered."

Throughout the show's history, but particularly in its heyday, many entries arrived by express shipment from an absentee exhibitor. It was to the great credit of the management that these entries were uncrated, cooped, and well looked after throughout the run of the show. To this point came Rule #21 in 1924 and remained in effect thereafter: "Experienced poultry men, all of whom are



competent judges and conditioners, will be on duty the day before the Show opens looking after birds of exhibitors who cannot be present, and will put on the last finishing touches before judging if request is made to the Secretary. After judging and all during the Show these men will be on the lookout for any ailing specimen and render first aid . . . .”

By the late 1920s, the focus of the Rules changed from so many concerned with negative issues, e.g., ownership of birds shown, fraudulent practices, rewards, and consequences, to those of more pragmatic issues, many of which we still find in the rules of shows today.

One final rule for the judges came in 1944/45: “The judges will be expected to be courteous to exhibitors, but to proceed carefully and expeditiously with their work, turn in their awards to office promptly, and then to visit with exhibitors to give out any information requested.” That was a *rule*!

## **CLASSES OF COMPETITION**

The APA’s publication of the first *Standard of Excellence* in 1874 had as its primary objective to set forth a consistent and regulated method by which poultry could and should be judged. Previously, individual shows dictated their own classes or groupings of competition and also the criteria for judging. For example, at the New York State Poultry Society show in 1869, the List of Premiums and Rules of Government decreed that “Entries of fowls will be designated by the “pen” or coop, but, in all cases, must consist of one male and one *or more* females. Thus a *pair* competes on an equal footing with a *trio* or *quartette*; but there must be no access of males.” Premiums were awarded to the Best, Second, Third, and Fourth pen “for merit *solely*” as assessed against the standard set forth by William B. Tegetmeier, F.Z.S that was “mainly depended upon.” While other shows of the time may have pitted individual birds against

each other in competition based on the then current criteria, it was the 1874 *Standard* that dictated the classes of judging within a variety of chicken be cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet.

While the declaration of these age- and sex-based classes was a major step forward, the 1874 *Standard* struggled with its terminology. The next *Standard* published in 1875 contained the first Glossary of Technical Terms which, although helpful, still fell short of the need but was subsequently improved upon with each succeeding edition. Class, in terms of breed and variety, was never defined, but used in phrases like “In Asiatic class” or “we will not recognize in our list or premiums any variety of a class of fowls, when such class is recognized in our standard of excellence, unless such variety is also recognized.” In the first example, “class” clearly refers to the Asiatic Brahmas and Cochins (Langshans were not yet admitted) but in the second example “class” probably means “breed”—a word seldom used at the time in favor of “variety,” “race,” or even “species.” Further, “variety” as used in the second example refers to the combination of both breed and varietal type (color, comb type, bearded or non-bearded). Thus, the Asiatic Class was composed of six *varieties*: Light Brahma, Dark Brahma, Partridge Cochin, Buff Cochin, White Cochin, and Black Cochin.

Inconsistent, ill-defined, and inadequate terminology plagued premium lists, catalogues, and show reports—including those of the early Madison Square Garden shows—until publication of the 1888 *Standard of Perfection* when Class (upper case “C”), breed, and variety were first used together in the system of classification we still employ today. This hierarchal system subsequently gave way to another use of the word “class,” (this one spelled with a lower case “c”) which refers to the smallest unit of fowls that compete against each other, either singly or as a group, for premiums, e.g., Standard Black Cochin cocks, Single-Comb White Leghorn Bantam pullets, Standard White Orpington old trios. As we

shall see, even the early “official” Madison Square Garden shows also offered competitive “classes” for other than living poultry.

The following information on the classes at the first “official” Madison Square Garden show in 1890 comes only from articles in *Harper’s Weekly* and *Farm-Poultry* (30, 31). The authors have not located either a premium list or catalogue for that show although *Farm-Poultry* reported, “an excellent catalogue was a great aid to a careful examination of the exhibits.”

The 1890 MSG show, following the APA’s 1874 directive, offered classes in large fowl and bantams for cocks, hens, cockerels, and pullets. Curiously, “cockerel” and “pullet” were each defined as “young” cock and hen, respectively, in the APA *Standard’s* first Glossary of Technical Terms in 1875, whereas “cock” was not defined in the Glossary until the 1888 edition and “hen” until the 1923 edition—both as birds being over one year old. *Farm-Poultry* mentions the presence at the show of “breeding yards” consisting “of eight or ten females and a male” and describes them as a “novel feature.” It is unclear if these pens competed in a class but they were offered for sale. Ducks, geese, and turkeys were almost certainly only shown in pairs and premiums only awarded to each breed as a whole rather than to classes (subcategories) within a breed: “One breeder of ducks expressed the opinion that “first” for Pekins would be taken by Mr. Rowland . . . or Mr. Miller . . . ; Mr. Miller took first and second on Rouens.”

Aside from live poultry classes at the 1890 show, “there was a light display of eggs and dressed poultry for competition, utility evidently not being a high card . . . .” The Association offered prizes for the “twelve best brown eggs, twelve best white eggs, twelve heaviest eggs, and best display of eggs in the show.” Dressed poultry classes included goose, duck, chicken, broilers, and capons.

Common to these early poultry shows was competition in poultry equipment, particularly incubators and brooders. Six makes of incubators vied for

honors, including Monarchs “which drew a crowd so great that at times it was difficult to get past,” Prairie State (three sizes), Buckeye, Thermostatic, Pineland, and Monitor. One wonders against what criteria incubators and brooders were competitively judged?

The 1892 Garden Show Catalogue sheds additional light on the classes offered in the early years. While classes for cocks, hens, cockerels, and pullets continued throughout the history of the Madison Square Garden Show for large fowl and bantam varieties, it took years to sort out and become standardized the classes for other poultry.

All breeds and varieties of ducks were shown in pairs in one “any age” class except Pekins, which had classes for two ages: “hatched prior to 1891” and “hatched 1891.” Geese, guinea fowl, pheasants and peafowl were also shown only in pairs with no age distinction. Quail were shown by display only. Bronze turkeys had four classes: “cock” and “hen” “hatched prior to 1891” and “hatched 1891.” White turkeys were shown by the pair in the two age classes.

There were 45 classes of breeding yards including large fowl, bantams, and ducks. The largest breeding yard class was that of Light Brahmas, with 20 entries.

Live capons had one class; dressed capons were shown in twos; dressed broilers in fours. Heaviest and best dressed chicken, duck, goose, and turkey each were restricted to an 1891 age class except turkeys, which also had an any age class. There were five classes for eggs: 12 best hen’s eggs, white; 12 best hen’s eggs, brown; 12 heaviest hen’s eggs, any color; 12 best duck’s eggs; and best display of eggs by one exhibitor.

Competitive “meat” and egg classes continued into the early 1900s; however, the official Egg Standard and standard for meat or capon classes was not published in the *Standard of Perfection* until 1923. The Egg Standard

disappeared from publication in the *Standard* in 1933 and the capon specifications in 1953.

There were three competition classes for Incubators, two for brooders, one for exhibition coops, and one for fencing. Pigeons were shown in 130 classes, rabbits in five, and guinea pigs in two.

In 1895, Rouen and Any Other Variety of Ducks had separate classes for drakes and ducks—both classes including birds of “any age.” Geese were also divided into different classes for ganders and geese, irrespective of age. White Turkeys had earned different classes for cocks and hens without the age specific classes of their Bronze cousins. Geese joined chickens, ducks, and turkeys in the dressed fowl classes. A new class for eggs appeared: For the best display of eggs by one exhibitor, not less than six varieties, each to be named. There were seven entries. Bone cutters had its own class in equipment along with incubators and brooders. Twelve entries competed in the display class of fowls (including pigeons).

In 1899, White Turkeys finally achieved both sex and age-defined classes.

In 1903, Rouen and Swedish Blue ducks joined Pekins in having classes defined by both sex and age, and Bronze Turkeys now had three years of age classes while White Turkeys retained just two. The 1903 Garden Show is of special note because of the canary and cage bird section under the auspices of the New York Ornithological Society. As fads in keeping certain animals came and went, for the previous 20 years, canaries had become extremely popular in the United States. An astounding 171 St. Andreasberg (Hartz Mountain) Rollers (canaries) competed in Class 25 of the 1903 Madison Square Garden Poultry Show. The following year, there were only 46 in the class.

In 1904, Toulouse Geese were, for the first time of any goose breed, assigned both age and sex classes.

Exhibition yards (exhibition pens or breeding pens—all regional names for the same thing) were now defined as consisting of “one male and four females for each breed and variety.”

Pigeons had their usual multiple classes, and pet stock classes included rabbits, cavies, cats, canaries, and cage birds.

In 1909/10, most varieties of ducks had both age and sex classes. Bronze and White turkeys each had cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet classes; other turkeys had cock and hen classes of any age. Toulouse and Embden geese had old and young gander and goose classes; other geese had any age gander and goose classes. Pigeons, rabbits, cavies, mice and rats, cats, and canaries and cage birds were also exhibited in their respective classes. Noteworthy among the competitive display classes were entries of curassows, pheasants, tragopans, peafowl, Purple Gallinules, and pelicans.

By 1915, there was finally continuity among classes offered for all breeds and varieties of turkeys, ducks, and geese with each having cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet (or old and young, male and female) classes. The display classes of ornamental and rare birds that year was the most varied to date and included such rarities as Australian Grouse, (African) Crowned Pigeons, six species of cranes, ostriches, and macaws.

In 1920, Exhibition Pens included ducks and geese (not turkeys) in separate old and young pen classes. Joining the pet stock classes of rabbits, cavies, and pigeons was a cat show.

In 1926, no pen classes were offered for bantams, turkeys, ducks, or geese. Classes were provided for “Standard Exhibition Barred Plymouth Rocks” only (as opposed, apparently, to production Rocks). Classes were also offered, for the first time, for American Pit Game Bantams.

Classes for old and young trios of large fowl and bantams first made their appearance at the 1944/45 show as did display classes defined as “of large fowl and bantams shall consist of not less than five entries, one of which shall be a trio, and the rest to include not less than one each cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet. In TURKEYS, PHEASANTS, GEESE, and DUCKS, four entries shall constitute a display, with no less than two males and two females.” “In Old English both Large Birds and Bantams all Colors as entered will have separate classes and so judged. In Pit Games, both in large birds and bantams, classification will be, Black Reds, Brown Reds, Pyles, Duck Wings, Grey, Blue, White, Black, White Hackles, MUFFS, and A.O.C. Barred Plymouth Rocks will have but one class for color and will be judged according to the *Standard of Perfection* effective 1943” (32).

Why Barred Plymouth Rocks continued to receive such special attention must be worthy of an article unto itself. Also that year, classes for guinea fowl and pheasants continued to be for pairs only. Turkey classes reverted to male and female in three age categories: old, yearling, and young. The display classes included several breeds and varieties of chickens, large fowl and bantam; capons; swans; peafowl; pheasants; rabbits; and pigeons.

Class offerings at the final Garden Show in 1949/50 remained the same as those of 1944/45.

To the great credit of the management of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc. the exhibition of new breeds and varieties and those unrecognized by the APA were always welcomed and even encouraged. Breeds and varieties not described in the *American Standard of Perfection* (current edition) were “judged according to accepted clubs standards” (Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., *Premium List*, 1949/50). Some of these newcomers

eventually achieved APA recognition through their debut at the Garden but many did not and have disappeared forever.

## **BREEDS AND VARIETIES**

The number of breeds and varieties shown at the Garden varied annually. However, an analysis of their relative numbers represented by actual entries, as opposed to classes offered in the premium lists, at approximately five-year intervals from 1892 to 1949/50 does reveal a few major trends.

When the first official Garden Show opened in 1890, the most recent *Standard of Perfection* (1888) identified 25 breeds and 61 varieties of large fowl, 7 breeds and 15 varieties of bantams, 8 breeds and 10 varieties of ducks, 6 breeds and 7 varieties of geese, and 1 breed and 6 varieties of turkeys. At the 1892 show, still governed by the 1888 *Standard*, actual entries comprised 30 breeds and 63 varieties of large fowl, 10 breeds and 21 varieties of bantams, 1 breed and 2 varieties of turkeys, 6 breeds and 6 varieties of ducks, 4 breeds and 4 varieties of geese, and one breed and variety of guinea fowl.

The predominance of large fowl over bantams continued until the Garden show reopened in 1943 after its 12-year hiatus. The peak numbers of large fowl breeds and varieties generally occurred from the mid-1910s to the mid-1920s: 31 breeds and 91 varieties in 1915, 31 breeds and 84 varieties in 1920, and 32 breeds and 81 varieties in 1924. In 1904, there were only 27 breeds but with 91 varieties. In 1944/45 there were 33 breeds but only 80 varieties and in 1949/50 just 24 breeds and 59 varieties.

Before 1930, bantam breed and variety numbers peaked in 1904 at 17 breeds and 32 varieties. In most years, there were less than 17 breeds and 40 (usually less than 30) varieties. In 1931, 23 breeds and 69 varieties appeared on the showroom floor. Following the hiatus and the continued boom in bantam



popularity and APA recognition of new varieties, there were 24 breeds and 94 varieties exhibited in 1944/45, and 20 breeds and 68 varieties shown in 1949/50.

Breeds and varieties of Ducks peaked during the 1910s and early 1920s, with the maximum of 12 breeds and 16 varieties shown in 1915. The highest numbers of breeds and varieties for geese came in 1915—7 breeds and 8 varieties; 1924—8 breeds and 9 varieties, and 1931—8 breeds and 8 varieties. Varieties of turkeys ranged from 2 to 5, with the most shown in 1931 and 1943/44.

Prior to the 1924 show, the annual Garden premium list listed by name and class number each individual class offered; exhibitors filled out their entry blanks accordingly. Breeds and varieties not assigned class numbers in the premium list (because they were new, rare, or unrecognized by the APA) could be written in by exhibitors with their class numbers assigned later. From 1924 onward, the premium list listed only premiums, awards, and specials, i.e., no class names by breed, variety, age, sex, etc., and no class numbers. Exhibitors filled out these entry blanks by writing in the breed and variety names in the appropriate age and sex boxes. Class numbers were no longer used. Despite the change in entry procedure, all breeds and varieties, officially recognized or not, were accepted into the show and documented in the annual show catalogue.

Using the same 5-year analysis of entries also reveals trends relative the popularity of specific breeds and varieties over time.

Based on relative entry numbers, Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Leghorns, Indian Games/Cornish, Rose Comb bantams, Cochin bantams, and Game bantams were the most consistently popular breeds throughout the seven-decade span of the Garden show.

Barred Plymouth Rocks were the most exhibited Rock variety, especially in the 1890s and 1900s (1900-1909). In 1908/09, 180 Barred Rocks composed

the cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet classes alone. In the following years, entry numbers dropped by more than half until the mid-1920s when in 1924 they reached 152 in the four age/sex classes. White and Buff Plymouth Rocks also peaked in entry numbers during the late 1890s-1910s. In 1892, there were 33 Whites and 13 Buffs shown; in 1899, 60 Whites and 65 Buffs; in 1904, 63 Whites and 78 Buffs. After that, Whites were always more abundant than Buffs with a peak of 114 Whites shown in 1908/09. In 1949/50, there were 58 Partridge Rocks shown.

White Wyandottes set the Garden record for the most birds shown in one variety with 305 birds competing in 1905. The White variety maintained a strong presence through the 1920s and dropped off thereafter. Buff and Partridge varieties were shown in about half the numbers of Whites through the late 1900s, 1910s, and 1920s, after which they too declined to a mere handful on exhibit.

Eleven Single Comb White Leghorns were shown in 1892 and 37 in 1899. In 1904/05 the number skyrocketed to 139 and generally remained in excess of 100 through the mid-1920s. In the 1940s, only three or four dozen were on exhibit. Rose Comb White Leghorns enjoyed relative popularity in the 1890s and very early 1900s, and then dropped off dramatically, except in 1924 when 38 were shown. Brown Leghorns (light and dark) maintained a respectable showing throughout the span of the Garden show, with entries of usually 30 to 90 birds annually.

Indian Games/Cornish were extremely popular in the 1890s, with 88 entered in 1899. Numbers declined thereafter to about half that until the 1940s, when they again increased to 89 on display in 1949/50.

Black Rose Comb, Cochin, and Black Red Game bantams greatly outnumbered all other bantam breeds exhibited in the 1890s, with an average of 18, 32, and 27, respectively, shown each year. Initially, Buff Cochin bantams

were more popular than blacks but by the 1930s, blacks had taken over the spotlight.

The popularity of other breeds and varieties showed greater fluctuations through the years as indicated by relative entry numbers.

The Light Brahma was the most numerous variety of any fowl in the 1892 show with 86 entries. Numbers remained strong into the 1920s, peaking in 1915 with 124. In the 1930s and 40s, their annual entry numbers dropped to two or three dozen. Dark Brahmas never enjoyed the level of popularity of the lights, with maximum entries in the late 1890s and early 1900s of about two dozen.

Langshans were very popular in the 1890s and early 1900s, then declined a bit through the 1910s, and bounced back in the 1920s with 60 birds entered in 1924. Thereafter, numbers fell off dramatically with only one bird entered in 1949/50.

Cochins, especially buffs, were very popular in the 1890s and early 1900s, with 112 birds shown in 1892, 102+ in 1899, and 96 in 1904/05. After that, annual entries dropped off to usually between one and two dozen before experiencing a two-fold increase in the 1940s—thanks in large part to Alex Duffy and Mort Cooper.

Rhode Island Reds were first shown just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1904 and 1908/09, rose combs dominated the single combs, 53 to 31 and 77 to 75, respectively. Thereafter, single comb entries were usually double or triple that of rose combs, peaking during the late 1910s and early 20s with 145 on display in 1920.

Five Blue Jersey Giants were exhibited in 1892 for the first, and possibly last, time. In the 1920s, Single Comb Black Jersey Giants jumped on the popularity bandwagon of large birds with 78 shown in 1924, and 73 in 1931. Less

than a dozen competed annually in the 1940s. Rose Comb Black Jersey Giant entries totaled eight in 1924 and three in 1931.

Orpingtons in white, buff, and black made their Garden debut in the first few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The three varieties alternated in popularity, though buffs usually had the highest entries, reaching 127 in 1920. After 1930, entries of whites and blacks dropped below a dozen, while those of buffs peaked at 31 in 1943/44.

Single Comb Black Minorca entries were 22 in 1892, 69 in 1899, generally in the 30s and 40s in the 1900s and 1910s, up to 108 in 1920, and usually less than 40 thereafter.

From 1899 through the 1920s, the entry of Blue Andalusians was usually 20 to 40 birds annually. In 1931, entries jumped to 89, fell to 10 in 1943/44 and zero in 1949/50.

Sicilian Buttercups, Anconas, Sussex, Campines, and Faverolles all showed the same pattern of entries: few or non-existent prior to the 1910s, a peak during the 1910s and 20s, and a drastic decline thereafter.

Houdans were exhibited in relatively large numbers from 1892 through the mid-1920s, and nearly disappeared in the 1930s and 40s.

Red Caps, Creve Coeurs, and La Fleche were all well-represented in the early 1890s and then more or less vanished.

In bantams, six Indian Game/Cornish bantams were shown in 1892 and then only one or two were shown annually until 1920 when 10 were shown. Their entries increased thereafter and by the 1940s exceeded four dozen annually.

Single Comb White Leghorn bantams made what may have been their first appearance in 1917/18 with four birds shown. They appeared again in 1924 with two entries. By the time the Garden show returned from its hiatus in 1943, they were extremely popular with 47 birds entered in 1949/50.

Silkies, originally classed as large or standard fowl and later classed as bantams, were exhibited in low numbers almost every year. They reached their peak in popularity from the mid-1920s to 1930s with entries of several dozen each year.

Sebrights were popular early on as well as in the 1930s and 40s when Japanese bantams came into favor.

Entries under the all-inclusive title of Game Bantams remained strong throughout the history of the Garden show, although the numbers under the various classifications of Game Bantam—Malay Game, Indian Game, Old English Game, Cornish Game, Pit Game, and Modern Game—varied with time.

## **UNUSUAL BREEDS & VARIETIES**

Over the years, Madison Square Garden was a showcase not only for exemplary specimens of the popular and long-standing breeds and varieties of poultry recognized by the APA *Standard*, but also for new, rare, and sometimes previously unheard of, breeds and varieties. These included, in:

1886—Kanaka Ducks, Red Mottled Pekin bantams, American Snowflakes

1890—Red Caps, Indian Games, Black Orpingtons (all three “hailed as new on this side of the water”

1892—Blue Langshan, Pea Combed Barred Plymouth Rock, Jersey Blue, Black Russian, Erminette

1904—Surrey or Sussex Fowl, Indian Games, Rumpless Black Red Game bantams, Minden Geese, Decoy Ducks (British term for Call Ducks)

1905—Vulturine Guinea Fowl (display)

1908/09—Diamond Jubilee Orpingtons

1915—Muffed and Tassel Pit game, Hennies Pit Game, Round Head Pit Game, Shawl Neck Pit Game, Claybourne and White Hackle Pit Game

1917/18—Blue Crown

1920—Black Rhinelanders, Missouri Fluffs

1922— Golden Diston

1924—Blue Edged Golden Wyandotte, Mahogany Orloff, Brown Red Mexican Pit Game bantam, Black Tail Mexican Pit Game bantam, Wheaton Mexican Pit Game bantam, Cuban Pit Game bantam, Top Knot Geese

1926—Siam Geese, Panama Geese

1929—Kiwi, Reptilian

1931—Dark Barred Plymouth Rocks, Light Barred Plymouth Rocks, White Laced Red Plymouth Rocks, White Laced Red Wyandottes, Blue Rose Comb bantam, Golden Japanese bantam, Blue Belgian bantam, Fawn Hennie Belgian bantam, Cuckoo Belgian bantam, Jubilee Cornish bantam, Black Indian Crested duck, Rouen Crested duck, Blue Crested duck, Brown Crested duck

1943/44—Porcelain Laced Wyandottes, Black Breese

1944/45—Blue Cornish, Creeper, Muff Pit Game, Black Hawk, Rock Red, Barnvelder, Blue Cornish bantam, Spangled Cornish bantam, Jungle Fowl, Dominique Old English Game bantam, Gray Old English Game bantam

1949/50—White Laced Golden Wyandotte, Blue Laced Golden Wyandotte, White Laced Red Wyandotte, Brown Red Cubalaya, Silver Duck Wing Cubalaya, Porcelain Cochin bantam, Silver Penciled Cochin bantam, Mammoth Bronze turkey, New Jersey Buff turkey.

Through the 1910s, the Garden show often offered separate classes and premiums for “Any Other Variety” within a breed as well as for “Any Other Variety of Poultry.” From 1926 onward, premium lists stated “Classes will be provided for Standard *and Non-Standard* varieties . . . .”

In an attempt to fill voids in the spectrum of domestic poultry displayed at the Garden, show management actually advertised in the 1921 *Premium List* for

exhibitors to show certain breeds and varieties that year; these included: Buff Brahmas; Partridge, White, and Black Cochins; White Laced Red Cornish; Creve Cours; Dominiques, Guinea Fowl; La Fleche; Silver Penciled Hamburgs; Red Houdans; White Langshans; R.C. White Minorcas; R. C. Buff and Black Orpingtons; All Polish; Red Caps; Sultans; Silver Penciled Wyandottes; Ducks—Aylesbury, Cayuga, Colored Muscovy, Grey and White Call, Crested White, Buff; Geese—African and Egyptian; as well as “many varieties of Bantams and Turkeys.” The Catalogue advertisement continued, “The above varieties possess considerable merit or they would not be bred. However, unless representatives of these varieties are shown at the world’s leading show, they will soon be forgotten by the public.

We want these varieties because we know it will help the breeders and will be an added attraction to our show. There are buyers for every variety.

We want to make ‘The Garden Show’ greater and this can be done by adding worthy varieties, such as the above.”

In the 1944/45 *Premium List*, management reaffirmed its commitment to displaying unrecognized fowls: “New breeds or varieties will be welcome and the Garden Show is the best place to introduce them to the public.”

It was the Garden show’s eagerness to showcase—to fanciers and the public—the ever-increasing diversity of poultry, especially in the heyday of the fancy, that helped make the show such a great success and so historically important.

## **AWARDS**

While the very first poultry shows were simply public displays of different kinds of fowl, it was not long before they became competitive with the exhibited fowls judged as to their relative merits based on ill-defined criteria. With

competition came awards in recognition of relative quality. The first shows in England awarded largely utilitarian prizes—things like a copper tea kettle, saucepan, or silver bell—as well as special or delicacy foods. Plum cakes were a common prize and observers of the poultry judging often speculated as to which bird would “take the cake” thus giving rise to this now common expression.

America’s first poultry show, held in Boston in 1849, followed the English lead: judges appraised birds on competitive merit and awarded prizes accordingly. That one’s birds would be judged by another and prizes bestowed on winners, did not sit well with all members of the poultry-keeping community. With talk of a second “Boston Show” in 1850, some fanciers voiced their objection to making it a competitive affair. The following two quotes of protest were published in the *Boston Cultivator* in 1850 and reprinted in *Reliable Poultry Journal* in December 1924.

“There is one more thing I must press upon the management, and that very strenuously, namely, that they offer no “premium for best.” By this arrangement they will save their money, and render unnecessary the appointment—the very disagreeable and onerous appointment—of judges, to which, indeed, I feel so repugnant as to declare I could never submit my stock to any set of men’s judgment, being well satisfied that my outlay of capital in the concern—which to say the truth has been heavy—has been so judicious, that I would by no means give anyone the power over it, to make or mar its character.”  
signed, “R”

“Let us meet as amateurs and breeders, in the most friendly way; let us show our poultry, and let each man attach his name to his coop; let the public look on, be joyous, and be instructed. Let there be no rivalry; let there be no committee of judges, but let everyone be his own judge. Let there be no paltry premiums, and there will be no heart-burnings, and no mortifications.



Now, it does appear to me, that if some such plan, or plans, could be adopted, it would do away with the unpleasantness that ever arises out of awarding of premiums. I do love the feathered tribes—I always did—but there are things far dearer to me than this love of beautiful creatures; I love harmony and peace among friends far more.” signed, John Giles.

The disenchantment with judges, judging, competition, and awards was based largely on the lack of regulations and lack of an accepted judging standard. Such discord continued for another quarter of a century until the APA came to the rescue and published the first *Standard of Excellence* in 1874. In the meantime, those in favor of competition and awards prevailed. Early American shows followed the British custom and awarded utilitarian items like clothes, furniture, and kitchen wares as well as imported cigars and fancy fruit. After the Civil War, gold, silver and bronze medals and nuggets of specified value joined cash as the principal prizes while, trophies, diplomas, buttons, and ribbons also took their place on the awards’ table.

Awards usually came from two sources: the organization sponsoring the show and specials offered by individuals and other organizations, such as breed clubs and businesses that usually were connected to the poultry industry, e.g., feed and supply companies or hotels near the show venue. Prior to the late 1870s, it was not an uncommon practice of show organizers to add a supplementary list to the regular premium list, generally entitled “special premiums,” for which an additional entry fee was charged in order for an entry to be eligible to compete for the “specials.” The newly formed APA was quickly called upon to put an end to such double entry fees for all shows under its auspices, thus entitling an exhibitor to compete for all awards for a single entrance fee.

What the awards were at the first poultry show in Madison Square Garden in 1883 is unknown, other than a reference made in *Harper's Weekly* that chicks hatching in an incubator on the show floor may “a year from now . . .” be “proudly occupying coops over yonder, and competing for silver cups or money sweepstakes” (12).

In 1884, *The Poultry World* refers to having previously printed the “list of awards” for that year’s MSG exhibition, but these authors have not been able to locate that list or any information from it (13).

In reference to the 1890 show, *Farm Poultry* reported: “The list of prizes was so numerous, and the amounts so generous, that every worthy bird received some recognition that was gratifying to the owner. The special prizes were designedly a great feature of the show, and attracted the attention of breeders all over the country” (33). This show provides our first true indication of the magnitude of the special prizes offered and, in turn, the immense popularity and support for exhibition poultry at that time.

*Harper's Weekly* reports these specials “in the pigeon classes alone amounting to nearly \$400, while those for the other classes counted up nearly \$1000 more”—these being “besides the usual regular premiums” (30). One wonders what those “regular” premiums amounted to.

Individuals and clubs offered specials for Best, Second Best, and even Third Best in both individual classes and displays. The highest value special reported was \$150 and was presumably paid in gold, as was typical for the time. (The equivalent weight in gold today would be worth approximately \$7,800). Other specials included \$100 in gold (approximately \$5,200 today) for the best Barred Plymouth Rock cockerel and best four pullets, \$25 in gold (\$1,300 today) for best Light Brahma male and four best pullets, a silver cup for highest scoring Light Brahma cockerel, a \$30 marble clock for best display of waterfowl and \$50

in gold (\$2,600 today) for best display of Dark Brahmas. With respect to the Dark Brahmas, *Harper's Weekly* notes with a mix of humor and skepticism: "That all of the birds exhibited, except two, belonged to two men—the one an officer of the society, and the other one of the judges."

"The judges had not completed the awards when the exhibit closed. All of the regular 'class' premiums had been given, but the high quality of the specimens and the close contesting resulted in many ties for the 'specials,' and 'recounts' were frequently necessary."

In addition to the regular classes of live poultry, the 1890 New York show also offered prizes for best-dressed poultry, eggs, and equipment.

A review of the 1898 show in *Harper's Weekly* stated "the awards amounted to \$7,000 in premiums (over \$155,000 today), in addition to some two score silver cups, many of them quite costly and beautiful, which have been offered by various private clubs throughout the country" (34).

The Madison Square Garden show of 1899 probably included premiums and specials similar to those of previous years. However, adding to our knowledge of awards of the period is a photograph in November 1890 edition of *The Feather* of the Superb Challenge Trophy Cup—an absolutely stunning trophy, probably silver, finely engraved with filigree and a generic rooster. The cup was awarded to C. H. Welles, Stratford, CT, for best cock, hen, cockerel, pullet, and breeding yard. Although the caption doesn't state the breed for which the award was given, Mr. Welles was the originator and breeder of the Welleslea Strain of Barred Plymouth Rocks.

Through 1906, first and second prizes were the money prizes in New York, and third prize was known as "very highly commended." Club specials that year included: for the American Leghorn Club; \$10 (equivalent to almost \$200 today) for first and \$5 for second to the member winning the most points on any

one variety; \$10 for best display of Duckwing Leghorns; and \$3 and \$2 awards for best and second best individuals in various classes. The American Plymouth Rock Club offered the club's National Silver Loving Cup, valued at \$50, to the best Barred Rock cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet; \$10 each for first through sixth place best cock and best hen and first through fifth place cockerel and pullet; \$10 for first through third place pens; \$25 each for best male, best female and best display; \$15 each for best pen mated for breeding exhibition males and females; \$15 each for best shaped male and female; and \$10 each for best colored male and female.

The American Exhibition Game and Game Bantam Club offered a \$150 Challenge Cup (to be won three times before ownership can be claimed) for best Game Bantam cockerel or pullet; and \$10, \$5, \$2.50, and \$1 specials for best in various classes.

Other breed clubs followed along similar lines as those above. Spratt's Patent (American) Limited offered numerous awards of \$5 in gold for best of breed hatched the previous year and same for "the heaviest live chicken."

The 1907 Madison Square Garden Show offered premiums of \$5 for first, \$3 for second, and, for the first time, a cash award of \$2 for third. (One dollar in 1907 was equivalent to almost \$20 today.)

The 1909/10 *Premium List* provides our first complete look at all of the premiums offered by the sponsoring organization and the outside specials. Premiums for large fowl and ducks competing in the open class were: \$5 for 1<sup>st</sup>, \$3 for 2<sup>nd</sup>, and \$2 for 3<sup>rd</sup> with four or more birds in a class; \$3 for 1<sup>st</sup> and \$2 for 2<sup>nd</sup> with two or three birds in a class, and \$2 with only one bird shown. For turkeys, geese, and bantams, the premiums were \$5 and \$2 for first and second, respectively, with four or more birds in a class, \$2 for first with less than four birds in a class. The show also awarded the titles of Very Highly Commended,

Highly Commended, and Commended for first through third, respectively, with four or more birds in a class; Very Highly Commended in classes of two or three birds. Rule # 3 stated: "All display premiums in the open classes, unless otherwise stated, will be decided thus: First Prize to count 6 points; Second Prize, 4 points; Very Highly Commended, 3 points; Highly Commended, 2 points; and Commended, 1 point."

While poultry exhibitors of the time may have understood this scoring, it was nowhere further explained in the premium lists until 1920: "A display shall consist of at least six single entries, to contain at least one male and one female, and one pen, except in turkeys, geese and pigeons, where a display consists of at least four single entries. All specials to be awarded as follows: First Prize counts six points, second four points, third three points, fourth two points and fifth one point. Pens to count double. Multiply the total number of winning points by the total number of specimens of that class shown and the result will be the total score. In case of a tie, the largest entry wins." In 1909/10, awards for displays and Exhibition Yards came from specials rather than show-sponsored premiums.

The American Poultry Association topped the list of specials that year, offering a Grand Prize Silver Medal for the best cockerel in the American, Asiatic, Mediterranean, and English classes, with "competition open to the world." The emphasis on "cockerel" rather than best of either sex, any age was typical for the time. The APA also offered a "Diploma for the best male under one year old in all standard varieties, competition open to the world." The National Bantam Association, the forerunner of the American Bantam Association, offered two silver cups and eight silver medals for age/sex categories of Game Bantams and Ornamental Bantams and Special Ribbons each for cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet in 27 breeds/varieties of bantams.

Individual sponsored specials included Silver Cups, valued at \$100 and \$50, “to be won three times before ownership can be claimed.”

The National White Leghorn Club offered the most specials of any club, including club medals, special ribbons, cups (one valued at \$100), trophies, \$10 in gold, and “by subscription \$100 cash” to club members winning prizes as specified in a rather intricate scheme of paying \$1 to \$5 premiums, in addition to those paid by the show, from first to sixth place for cock, hen, cockerel, pullet, and pen. Other clubs offered prizes of medals, cups, ribbons, and cash (\$2 to \$30) for every placement from Best to Fifth and in such interesting categories as “best shaped,” “best surface colored,” “best colored,” and for, American Black Minorca Club members winning the most points from each of nine states (128 Black Minorcas competed).

Class premiums remained the same in 1910 but that year the New York Poultry and Pigeon Association dramatically increased its special premiums by offering \$25 (almost \$490 today) for Best Display in each of 37 classes, of large fowl, 3 classes of ducks, 2 classes of turkeys, and 6 classes of bantams—\$1,200 in all (\$23,500 today). Meanwhile, the National Bantam Association reduced its offering of special ribbons from cock, hen, cockerel, and pullet to Best Male and Best Female for each breed/variety.

Premiums and awards in 1911 remained similar to the previous year with the notable exception of the National Single Comb White Leghorn Club following the America Black Minorca Club’s precedent, by offering a total of \$75 in gold to members in good standing winning the most points in each of six states as well as “other states” and “to exhibitor from the longest distance if winner of eighth prize or better.”

In the economic aftermath of World War I (1917-18), premiums and cash specials offered in 1920 were drastically reduced. Prize money for single classes

was cut nearly in half, while ribbons only were awarded to pen classes. Display prizes consisted of “a beautiful certificate signed by the President and Secretary” in all four classes and a ribbon for Best, Second and Third Best Display. Club cash specials generally did not exceed \$5 each and were far fewer in number than before the war while “handsome silk ribbons valued at \$1.00 each” seemed to have become the choice awards of many clubs. Several clubs and friends of clubs offered silver cups, valued at up to \$100, usually for the best display of their breed/variety. The newly designated American Bantam Association offered six silver medals and 20 diplomas. The premium list of 1920 lists no awards, cash or otherwise, offered by the American Poultry Association. Of interest, however, was a special award offered by Mr. Naoyoshi Mori of the Tokyo Electric Co., Japan, of a 500-year-old Japanese sword, valued at \$300 (approximately \$3,000 today) for the first prize Single Comb White Leghorn Cockerel. The prize was considered “one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Special ever offered as a prize on a single bird.” It was won by Owen Farms, Vineyard Haven, MA.

Many poultry historians believe that World War I was the real impetus behind the appearance and the rapid rise in popularity of newly recognized breeds and varieties of bantams—especially in Great Britain. The lean war years forced British poultry keepers to trade-off their large fowl for the economically more advantageous diminutives. The trend also quickly took root in America and at the Garden show in 1921, while all other premiums remained the same, those of bantams were increased to include a new fifty cent premium for third place in classes of four or more, a new \$1.00 premium for second place in classes of three, and a new \$1.00 premium for first in classes of two. Ribbons remained the only award offered for bantam pens. Despite the growing interest in bantams, the 1921 *Premium List* lists no specials offered by either the American Bantam Association or the American Poultry Association. The trend in specials of offering

expensive silver cups became more and more popular with ten cups offered by individuals, not clubs, and all but one for Best Display.

In 1922, premiums remained the same but specials increased significantly, including \$50 in cash awards from the American Light Brahma Club, cash specials and additional cash premiums for first through fifth place in all White Wyandottes from the National White Wyandotte Club for the National meet, \$150 cash from the American Buff Wyandotte Club, over \$50 cash from the Blue Andalusian Club of America, and lesser amounts of cash, metal badges, and special ribbons from other clubs. The American Bantam Association was back offering three silver and two bronze medals and 27 diplomas. Mr. N. Mori of Japan again offered a unique special: “a splendid and rare [Japanese] vase to the best cock in the American Class, and a member of the American Black Orpington Club offered “a handsome Water Jug with a Black Orpington inlaid in natural colors, and six glasses, each of which have the Black Orpington inlaid, same as the jug. The set is trimmed in pure gold and will bear the winner’s monogram in gold.”

The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., now began offering, as clubs or individuals did previously, Sterling Silver Cups for Best Displays, and expanded the special to 10 breeds and 22 varieties of chickens and waterfowl as a group. Cups had to be won three times for ownership but each year an elegant rosette bearing the winner’s name was given.

Premiums decreased again in 1924. Third place money for large fowl classes was withdrawn. Turkeys and waterfowl, which had previously shared the same premium scale with large fowl, now had their own reduced scale, paying \$2.50 and \$2.00 for first and second in classes of four or more and \$1.50 and \$1.00 in classes of three. Bantams, too, lost their recently bestowed third place premium in classes of four or more, and all payment in classes of two, and



suffered a fifty-cent reduction each in all other premiums offered. Previously classified as large fowl and thus eligible for the larger premiums, guinea fowl and Silkies now required the same entry fee and received the same premium money as bantams.

Club specials increased slightly in cash awards, though trophies, ribbons, cups, and “trophy-ribbons” were also common. The sponsor continued to offer 23 Sterling Silver Cups for the Best Displays, and also \$100 for the Best Pen in Show. This award was apparently first offered in 1923. The New York World Poultry department offered a “valuable . . . massive and artistic cup of solid sterling silver” for Best exhibition Pen of Large Poultry, and the H. V. Crawford Memorial Sterling Silver Cup by Tiffany & Co. was offered for the Best Young Pen. The American Bantam Association upped its ante to include: 1 silver trophy, 3 gold medals, 6 silver medal, 27 bronze medals, and special ribbons and certificates. Once again, the 1924 *Premium List* mentions no specials from the American Poultry Association.

For the first time, the 1926 *Premium List* also included an “Egg Department” whose rules governing awards included: “Five prizes, each carrying a handsome ribbon, will be awarded in each class [19 classes listed] with “Special” for best dozen white eggs and best dozen brown eggs and “Grand Sweepstake” for best dozen in competition all competing. Premiums will be awarded by using the following scale of points: Size 20, shape 20, color 20, shell texture and condition 20, quality 20, total 100 points. Eggs shall weigh 24 ounces and over, except Bantam in which case, small size will be given preference.” In addition to premiums certificates were also awarded.

The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show survived the first three years of the Great Depression. The authors have been unable, however, to locate premium lists for those years. The 12-year hiatus in the show that followed

transcended the lingering years of the Depression, the recession of 1937-38, the conscription act of 1940, and all but the final few months of World War II. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that when Madison Square Garden opened its doors to the poultry show of 1944/45, premiums and cash specials were at an all time low. Premiums for large fowl, turkeys, ducks, geese and pairs of guineas (now classed as bantams) were \$2.00 for First and \$1.00 for Second in classes of four or more, and \$1.00 for First in classes of two or three. For bantams, it was \$1.00 for First and fifty cents for Second in classes of four or more, and fifty cents for First in classes of two or three.

New to the offerings were premiums for trios, paying \$4.00 for First and \$2.00 for Second in Large Fowl and one-half that for bantams. Also new were premiums for pheasants: \$2.50 for First and \$1.50 for second in classes of four or more and \$1.50 for First in classes of two or three.

The American Poultry Association returned to the specials offerings with “a beautiful and appropriately lettered ribbon for the Champion Fowl in each breed”; 10 Gold Medals for the major Classes of Large Fowl, Bantams, Waterfowl, and Turkeys; nine Certificates of Merit for Best Display; and a bronze plaque known as the Master Breeders Award for “the best 10 birds produced and shown by an A.P.A. member in this show.”

The American Bantam Association continued to offer four trophies and 18 medals for best of breed.

Thirteen clubs also posted specials including a few trophies, rosettes, special ribbons, magazine subscriptions, settings of eggs, offspring of previous Madison Square Garden winners, war stamps, and war bonds. The highest cash special was \$6.00, there were several \$5.00 prizes, most were either \$1.00 or \$2.00.

The 1949/50 *Premium List* for the final poultry show at Madison Square Garden, reveals no changes in premiums from five years earlier. The American Poultry Association increased its offering of Golden Bronze Medals to 12 and also offered a Special Champion Gold Edged Ribbon for each champion bird of each breed, in large fowl and bantams. There is no listing of any specials offered by the American Bantam Association. Seven breed clubs sponsored the usual prizes of trophies; medals; ribbons; plaques; modest cash awards; and, from the National Leghorn Bantam Club, enameled tie clasps.

Initiated sometime during the previous four years, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc. again offered six Championship Specials for: Grand Champion solid-colored bird of the show (large fowl), Grand Champion parti-colored bird of the show (large fowl), Grand Champion clean legged bird of the show (bantam), Grand Champion feather legged bird of the show (bantam), Grand Champion Waterfowl, and Grand Champion Turkey. The award for each grand champion was “a photographic cut made by Arthur O. Schilling, eminent poultry artist . . . .” The sponsor states, “This will be one of the most coveted of all poultry prizes. It will also be one of the greatest achievements and an honor of merit to have a picture of one of your great birds in the Madison Square Garden Scrap Book.”

And so it was.

The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show never took the level of competition above the Class level. There was never a Champion Large Fowl, Bantam, or Waterfowl, and no Grand Champion.

## **ENTRY FEES**

The earliest information we have found on entry fees for the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show comes from an article in *Poultry*, wherein we read

that “next year the entry fees will be increased to \$3 per specimen, \$5 for a breeding pen and \$15 for display pens. The increase, we understand, does not apply to Bantams or Pigeons” (24). Impressive fees, considering \$1 in 1907 is equivalent to almost \$20 today. Regardless of how pricey that may seem now, the zeal of showing poultry at Madison Square Garden was so great that the author of the article speculates, “We doubt if the increased entry fee affects the number of entries to any great extent, for the ambition of progressive breeders to win at this show will overcome any notion of economizing by cutting down the list of entries.”

The 1909/10 *Premium List* gives entry fees of \$3 per bird for poultry and ducks, \$5 for an exhibition yard, and \$2 per bird for turkeys, geese and bantams.

The 1913 *Premium List* gives an entry fee of \$5 for the apparently new classes of exhibition yards for turkeys, geese, and bantams.

In the economic aftermath of World War I, entry fees in all classes increased in 1920 to: large fowl, turkeys, ducks, and geese—\$3.50 singles, \$6 exhibition pens (no turkeys), and for bantams—\$2.50 singles, \$3.50 exhibition pens. Note that turkeys and geese were now on par with large fowl and ducks rather than bantams.

Because of continuing economic hard times entry fees dropped in 1921. Turkeys, ducks, and geese (now treated separately from large fowl and bantams) decreased to \$2.50 singles, \$3 pens. Bantam fees also fell fifty cents to \$2 singles, \$3 pens. Large fowl entry fees remained unchanged.

In 1924, large fowl single entry fees rose to \$4 in an accommodation to the return of more expensive single-tiering on the main floor. Pens remained at \$6. Turkeys and Waterfowl were unchanged. Bantam fees decreased another fifty cents to \$1.50 singles and \$2.50 pens as a consequence of being moved from the balcony to the lower level.

In 1926, egg classes carried no entry fee and “Any one exhibitor can enter as many dozen as he likes.”

When the poultry show at Madison Square Garden resumed in 1944/45 after a 12-year hiatus, entry fees were at their all-time low and remained there through the last show in 1949/50: large fowl, \$2 single, \$4 trio; bantam, \$1 single, \$2 trio; guinea fowl, \$2 pair only; pheasants, \$2.50 pair only; ducks, \$2 single only; geese, \$1.50 single only, turkeys, \$1.50 single only; display cages, \$10.

## **ENTRY NUMBERS**

Published reports of the entry numbers for Madison Square Garden poultry shows are often misleading and seldom comparable among years, depending on what classes were included in the total. To foster the highest possible numbers, some reports included entries in all classes: live poultry, dressed poultry, eggs, equipment, 4-H poultry, pigeons, pheasants, cage birds, displays, sales birds, rabbits, cavies, other pet stock, etc. Other reports were more selective. Rarely were the numbers explained.

In the following summary the authors include as total entries only large fowl, bantams, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guinea fowl, inclusive of single entries and individual birds entered as pens or trios. We tallied the numbers directly from published show catalogues.

Total entries during the 1890s hovered in the low 2,000s. By 1904 they jumped to over 3,000 and, with few exceptions, from 1906 through the mid-1920s exceeded 4,000 birds. The highest entry we found was 4,736 in 1913. From the mid-1920s through the beginning of the show's 12-year hiatus after the 1931 show, total entries ranged from the upper 2,000s to mid-3,000s. During the 1940s, total entries remained in the low to mid-2,000s.

Pen classes were surprisingly popular, especially young pens, from 1890 to the 1940s when trios replaced pens. From 1906 to 1929, pen entries ranged from just under 200 to over 300, representing approximately one-third of total entries.

Readers may be surprised at the modest number of total entries, even in the peak years, for a show so famous as Madison Square Garden—especially in light of the combined APA and ABA shows at the Ohio National in 1998 and 2002 that each exceeded 10,000 birds, and even the second Boston Show that reportedly topped 12,000 birds back in 1850, when poultry shows were just getting started. But, numbers alone don't make a show. Madison Square Garden was a show of quality and poultry exhibitors, for the most part, entered only the very best they had. It was a matter of pride among peers. And, as everyone knew back then, sometimes it only took one bird to make a breeder's reputation and fortune.

While some breeders sealed their reputation for quality by the success of one bird, others boasted the overall placements of their inter-varietal strings as revealed in the *American Chicken Fancier's* editorial review of the 1922 Garden Show: "For the first time in my acquaintance with poultry shows, an absent exhibit was the subject of more interest to the greatest number of people present . . . . E. B. Thompson of Amenia, N. Y., whose 'Imperial Ringlet Barred Plymouth Rocks' have for nearly a decade been the outstanding feature in the Barred Rock alley, and for the past seven or eight years the feature of the show that attracted most attention of breeders of other varieties as well as of Barred Rocks, did not exhibit . . . . His first reason for staying out this year was, to quote his own words to me—'My birds have won every glory possible. At the five shows preceding this—1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921—I won every first prize offered—27 out of 27. At the last four shows I won 133 prizes of a possible 135. At the last two

shows—1920 and 1921—I won every prize and ribbon offered, 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> in every class—Cocks, Cockerels, hens, pullets, old pens, young pens—60 prizes out of 60 offered. In addition I won every special prize, including sweepstakes, champion male and female, shape and color specials, male and female” (27). Not a bad record! E.B. Thompson was the exception rather than the rule in the number of birds he annually showed at the Garden, but his success made him one of the most famous poultry breeders in the country.

While the Garden Show management was always happy to receive large multiple entries like those of E.B. Thompson, however, adequate floor space for the show became a problem by the early 1920s as two opposing needs clashed head-on. One was the poultry show that was rapidly expanding. The show needed floor space, depending on the year, to coop individual entries; exhibition pens; displays; sales birds; competitive classes of equipment (incubators and brooders), eggs, and dressed fowl; commercial displays (equipment and supplies); educational displays; breed and club booths; and press booths.

The other pressing need was the use of the Garden for new or revamped events such as prize-fighting, horse shows, track meets, six-day bicycle races, the Rodeo and Stampede, national political conventions, etc. The valuable open floor space needed for the poultry show was at odds with the floor plan many of these events required: “the most impressive thing about the show in these later years is the evidence seen on every hand that the Garden Show has outgrown the Garden . . . as changes in the arrangement of the Garden to suit its use for other purposes restrict the space available for exhibits. Bigger shows have been staged in the amphitheatre and galleries than those that now send a considerable overflow to the basement” (27).

The Poultry Show attempted to meet its need for space by using, at times, all three of Garden II’s exhibition areas—the balconies (galleries), amphitheatre

(main floor), and basement (lower level). Still, in some years it was not enough. In 1922, management returned over 400 entries for lack of room (27).

Another factor that limited entries was the management's desire to display birds only in single tiers—at least on the main floor of Madison Square Garden II. Until 1905, this was possible. However, that year “so many entries were received that it was necessary to range the coops in double tiers. This was a disadvantage in some ways, as double tiering always is, but it had the great advantage of allowing wide aisles through which visitors could pass in perfect ease” (35).

In 1923, “Secretary D. Lincoln Orr stated he was compelled to return entries for lack of cooping space. Not only was the Garden taxed to its capacity, but it was overtaxed in the single entries in the large poultry division. This necessitated double-tiering, which practically resulted in many fine specimens hiding their light under a bushel, so to speak” (36).

Protests over the double tiering issue led to a re-arrangement of the show in 1924: bantams were moved from the balcony to the lower level (basement) with the waterfowl and the large fowl exhibition pens were moved from the main floor to the balcony. The newly available main level floor space allowed, once again, for single tiering. As the show's president declared, “The slight increase in single entry fees will not begin to compensate for the increased expenses caused by this re-arrangement and for the decreased cooping capacity in the singles. Indications are that we cannot possibly lose less than \$800.00 [over \$8,600 today] due to the change.” Yet, he proudly announced: “Every bird this year will be caged on the same level.” It is hard to imagine the Poultry Show had now come to occupy to capacity all three exhibition levels of the great Madison Square Garden!

In Garden III, opened in 1926, the poultry show was, and thereafter would be, held in the basement “where the finish is pure white . . . . The ceilings are



studded with bright lights and it gives a very beautiful effect” (25). While double tiering may have been the practice there early on, when the show resumed in 1944 with fewer entries, the 1944/45 *Premium List* declared: “that a floor space 200 ft. by more than 300 ft. has been engaged by us for our show, ALL ON ONE FLOOR LEVEL, which insures ample space for concessions, displays, and single tiering of all birds and with wide aisles which is a guarantee of comfort and convenience, and that friendly feeling all with one another, JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.”

One must also remember that throughout its history, the poultry show at Madison Square Garden was always more than just a poultry show. Depending on the year, pigeons, rabbits, and pet stock of all descriptions may have been a part of the show and all of these entrants together with their displays and booths required exhibition space. The spectacle of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show was diverse.

Exhibitor expenses also limited Garden show entries. A \$3.00 entry fee in 1907 would be equivalent to almost \$60 today. At that cost, how many birds would you enter? Further, if an exhibitor attended the show, he bore the expense of getting there and of staying in New York City, one of the most expensive cities in the world, for a week and often around the year-end holidays. Shipping entries to the Garden was a less expensive alternative but there was still the cost of crating and shipping even though the exhibitor usually paid the express charges only one way while the Garden paid the return.

## **SALES**

From the beginning, the management of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show recognized and promoted the show as an excellent venue for the sale of exhibition poultry. Early entry forms, similar to those used today, also

included a space for the optional selling price of each bird or display entered. Through 1913, the published show catalogue, that listed the entrants per class by exhibitor also listed, if for sale, each entrant's selling price. "The Association will be pleased to undertake the sale of birds for exhibitors, free of charge. To facilitate and assist this project, the selling price must be stated in the Catalogue" (37).

In the 1890s, sale prices for most birds ranged from \$5 to \$50 (\$102 to \$1,026 today) but sometimes reached as high as \$500 (\$10,262 today) per bird (for standard Buff and White Cochins in 1892). In this time of renewed hen fever, sales were brisk. "Remember nearly \$20,000 [\$410,000 today] worth of birds were sold during the days of the last show [1891]" (38).

A review of the 1890 show illustrates that the rising boom in exhibition poultry popularity was of mixed genesis: "With regard to sales made during the show, and the orders given, it may be said that the success exceeded expectation. Nearly all the birds in the breeding yards were sold at good prices. The orders for both birds and eggs have been abundant—the Cochins, Brahmas, Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks, and Langshans taking the lead. From this it will be seen that the general buyers of both birds and eggs prefer those species that promise meat rather than feathers. Fancy birds of small size may be pretty enough to look at, but the general buyers consider the stomach rather than the eye in making an investment" (33).

*Harper's Weekly* reported that at the 1898 show "The total value of the stock on exhibition was estimated at about \$150,000 [over \$3,300,000 today], and in the course of the exhibition many large sales were made, one transaction amounting to \$1,500 [\$33,000] today. Single birds were held in some cases as high as \$150 [\$3,300 today]" (34).

In 1905, “some good sales were made. Harry Graves sold two exhibition pens of White Rocks to William Barry Owen for \$1,500 [\$30,785 today] and the buyer got a splendid lot of birds. E. G. Wyckoff bought two Columbian Wyandottes for \$60 and sold them for \$200 [\$4,105 today] before the show was over and in this case the last buyer got all he paid for, for the birds were as fine as this variety has yet produced” (35).

The declaration of having “Won at the Garden” became the most coveted advertising claim in the fancy, solidifying a breeder’s reputation for birds of superior quality and translating into high sales prices. Perhaps the greatest monetary claim associated with winning at the Garden was the famous White Orpington pullet Peggy, owned by Kellerstrass Farm of Kansas City, MO. An advertisement in *The Poultry Item* valued Peggy at \$10,000. “First prize winner at Jamestown Exposition, Madison Square Garden, New York, and everywhere else she has been shown. The reason we value [her] at Ten Thousand Dollars is because we refused \$2,500 for her after we sold five of her chicks for \$7,500, and we will give \$10,000 for a “Crystal” White Orpington Hen that will equal her in every way” (39). What cost \$10,000 in 1909 would cost about \$205,303 today!

Owen Farms was one of the major breeder advertisers in the 1910s and early 20s, filling pages of poultry magazines with news of their Garden accomplishments: “417 OWEN FARMS BIRDS have won FIRST PRIZES at MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK, as far as competition from other breeders is concerned. NO SIMILAR RECORD HAS BEEN MADE BY THE BIRDS OF ANY OTHER BREEDER IN ALL THE WORLD” (40).

In 1914, the Garden show inaugurated the Exhibitor’s Lounging and Writing Room, Bureau of Information and Call System “to enable intending purchasers to find breeders on the floor” (41). Clearly, sales was a driving force behind the continuing success of the show.

Endorsements of Garden show winnings as a sign of quality stock became a subject of journal editorials. In an article entitled “From Whom to Buy,” the publisher of the *American Poultry Advocate* wrote: “Many people are often puzzled where and from whom to buy. They look over the papers, read advertisement after advertisement, and they all read well, and after the papers are put on the table, doubts, one after another, come into their minds. It really is perplexing. The claims made by the different breeders are good and one after the other seems to have a point over the others. . .but a splendid mark is ‘Won at Madison Square Garden,’ as it is a distinctively characteristic and highly distinguished show” (42).

As hen fever continued to soar into the 1920s, Garden show management went all out in its 1920 *Premium List* to promote itself as America’s leading venue for sales: “Madison Square Garden is located in the largest, richest and all around greatest buying center in the world. In population, wealth, industries represented, manufacturers, shipping and a score of other important features, the metropolitan district of Greater New York surpasses the metropolitan district of any other community. It is logical to conclude therefore that on any one day more purchasing power is represented by visitors during the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, than the entire five or six day number of visitors that attend any other poultry show in the world. . . . Modesty forbids our making the statement as one of our own claims, but numerous exhibitors tell us every year that as a help to them in selling high class stock and eggs they find it means more to them to win even a fifth place at the Garden than to win a first place at any other show in the country.”

“MADISON SQUARE GARDEN POULTRY SHOW offers to those who are looking for the greatest publicity in order to sell their stock at the top price—A most extraordinary chance. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN is the sport center of

the world. 'Won at the Garden' has an advertising value such as is offered by no show or place on this world. A silver cup or certificate engraved MADISON SQUARE GARDEN has a distinction and reputation apart from any other show and universally acknowledged as the utmost and latest of all models of live poultry art" (43).

Although the Garden show seemed to do almost everything possible to promote sales of exhibition poultry, some exhibitors were just not willing to sell at any price. "Dan Young was offered \$100 for his 1<sup>st</sup> [White Leghorn] Cock [at the New York Show, 1936]; but this did not interest him, any more than did an offer of \$5000 from Wm. Barry Owen, a few years ago [probably 1910s], for 1<sup>st</sup> Cock at Madison Square Garden" (44). In today's money, that would be about \$72,000 for one bird—and the offer was refused!

Owing to the demand, Garden show officials established the first Sales Department in 1921. "This department will fill a long felt want and will enable exhibitors to display before the public a class of stock in which a majority of the public is interested and which breeders are anxious to sell. Breeders will find a ready sale for the proper quality of birds and will find exhibits in these classes a most profitable venture. It is urged that breeders price their birds fairly and not in excess of their true value. We can not sell your birds at exorbitant prices but with honest values we know you will find this department one of the best selling mediums to be found. Thousands of the better class of people in search of this class of stock will attend the show daily" (20). Management charged a Sales Department entry fee of \$2.00 for single specimens and \$4.00 for a pen of four females and one male. "The entrance fee covers feed, water, coop and care. No extra charge is made for sales." Prior to the existence of the Sales Department, only birds entered into competition could be sold on premises: "No specimens will

be allowed in the hall except those which have been duly entered in the books of the Society, and the entry fee and express charges paid (45).

In 1920, possibly earlier, Garden management published in addition to the show *Catalogue*, a *List of Exhibitors* booklet. This was apparently the forerunner to *The Red Book* or *Buyer's Guide* which was probably published initially in 1922. "All the names and addresses of the exhibitors of all the departments listed and classified by breeds and varieties . . . . These books are advertised and sent free all over the world . . . . Right under your thumb you have the names and addresses of the best breeders in the world, mammoth incubators or day-old chicks, poultry feeds or disinfectants, meat scrapes or buttermilk, portable houses or poultry supplies, poultry publications or trap-nests, in fact, anything you want in the poultry line" (46).

The sales department, as such, and publication of the *Buyer's Guide* were relatively short-lived, being discontinued possibly as early as the late 1920s. In any event, they were not existent when the show resumed after its 12-year hiatus in 1943.

During the war years of the 1944/45 show, Garden Management promoted sales by offering, for a \$10 rental, special display cages measuring "4 feet by 5 feet by 4 feet in height, in which can be shown from six to ten birds . . . . You may put your Sale Price on the Display Cage also price of extra females or similar birds you have at home, or if you prefer, you may send your prices to me, and simply have a card on your cage, For Sale, see Secretary and both myself and the Floor Superintendent will make every effort to make sales for you, and remit full sales prices, and no commissions to be deduced" (47). The sales promotion was, perhaps, not so much to push the sale of show quality specimens but of poultry of more utilitarian value, harking back to the early 1890s. This time, however, it was in response to the pressures of war: "As our Government has

urged that more Eggs and Poultry be produced, it has been taken up whole heartedly by thousands everywhere, who are keeping small flocks in small quarters and are IMMENSELY PLEASED BY THEIR SUCCESS in having their own eggs and poultry on which there is NO CEILING PRICES nor RATION POINTS. These new and enthusiastic poultry keepers are potential buyers, and added to the buyers of former years at the Garden, will bring you good returns” (47).

After the war, the Garden continued to offer these display cages for sale birds and, one assumes, again for a higher quality show stock. Curiously, the entry form for the Garden’s last show continued to provide a space for the selling price of each bird entered, although these prices were no longer listed in the show catalogue. Continuing to push the Garden as a venue for sales right up until the end, Charles Burmaster, Show Manager, reminded exhibitors that “the highest prices of the times were paid for birds shown in The Garden and the greatest record of sales made by exhibitors in any Show Room was also made at the Garden” (32).

## **ADVERTISING/PROMOTION**

The considerable cost of staging a poultry show in the entertainment showcase of the world was offset, in part, through advertisements placed in the annual premium list and catalogue. The ads paint an interesting portrait of the changing socio-economic backdrop of the show as well as of the show’s exhibitors and viewing public.

In the 1890s, advertisements included the expected offerings, appealing to poultrymen of poultry stock, equipment, medicines, trade journals, show awards, books, and feed—including “Prepared Meat,” i.e., ground beef scrap and ground bone which were popular poultry foodstuffs of the day. It was the Gay Nineties,

however, and the poultry show at Madison Square Garden was a social event enjoyed by New York's upper crust. The catalogue available to paid visitors contained advertisements aimed at this refined audience as well. It contained ads for champagne; wines; liquors; cigars and tobacco; fine hats and umbrellas; imported ladies', gentlemen's, and children's gloves of "any shade for Opera, Reception, and Promenade Wear"; "up-to-date shoes"; pianos; watches and ornamental (diamond) jewelry; bonbons and chocolates; restaurants; golf goods; fruiterers; angora cats; and steamship service to Florida. Perhaps most amusing was an 1899 full-page ad by one company for three services/products featuring the Original Harold Jennings Practical Rat Catcher, Exterminator and Dead Shot Insect Powder, and Importer and Dealer in all kinds of Angora cats, birds, dogs, and monkeys.

Throughout the first decade of the new century, cigarettes (Pall-Mall, Philip Morris, Nestor); Dewar's Scotch Whiskey; and imported and domestic bottled table water dominated the advertising of non-poultry related products, with the advertisers name and product printed on the top and bottom of almost every page of the catalogue. Joining their ranks to lesser degrees were ads for Cuban cigars; ginger ale, sarsaparilla, and lemon soda; mint Jujubes (for coughs and throat irritation); beer; gum; ladies' apparel; the Long Island Railroad; steamship service to Cuba; a health resort in North Carolina; and for exhibitor and visitor alike, quality hotels near Madison Square.

Non-poultry related ads continued on the pages of premium lists and catalogues throughout the 1910s. Fatima Turkish cigarettes dominated Pall-Mall, Philip Morris, and Chesterfields, while whiskey offered in "non-refillable bottles" seemed to fill a need of the day. Candy, bottled water, chewing gum, and Tutti-Frutti Pepsin (an aid to digestion) also helped fill the pages. During this era, Madison Square Garden took to advertising it's own upcoming events, e.g., the



Westminster Kennel Club's Show, the Real Sportsmen's Show, and the Automobile Show. By 1913, hotels advertised their rooms "with bath." The American Poultry Association advertised in 1919 with a full-page ad on the catalogue's inside back cover.

Contrary to what one might expect, advertising during the Roaring Twenties progressively turned away from non-poultry-related extravagances to more poultry-practical ads of stock, trade journals, feed, supplies, and winter fairs down South. Stock ads often shared in the proclamation of winnings at previous Madison Square Garden Shows and invoked "Won at the Garden" as the best advertisement there was.

In the show's closing years of the 1940s, there were a spattering of ads for feed, equipment, books, trade journals, freezer paper, and hotels, but stock ads were by far the most numerous. Also, each year the National Poultry Institute, Inc., took out a full-page ad; A. O. Schilling, the world-renowned poultry artist and photographer, regularly promoted his services; and in 1946, the *Poultry Press* added its name to the pages as "America's Oldest Established Poultry Newspaper" and "The leader in the field of Standard-Bred Poultry Journalism for thirty-two years."

## **THE PRESS**

The poultry show at Madison Square Garden was unique in the extent to which it attracted the public at large, i.e., those people whose sole prior experience with poultry was on their dinner plate. Certainly, the location, New York City—the entertainment showcase of the world and Madison Square Garden, the most renowned entertainment venue in that city, was largely responsible. It was also a matter of timing. Throughout most of the Garden show history, people went outside of their home for entertainment. It was a time when

going out was something special; when choices of entertainment were more limited; and a time when local newspapers played a greater role in promoting an event.

One of the most remarkable things about the Poultry Show at Madison Square Garden was the amount of press coverage it received, not only from the poultry trade press but also from local newspapers and national publications. *Harper's Weekly*, the New York based preeminent news and literary journal of the last half of the 19th century, led the way in national coverage, beginning with the first show held in Garden I in 1883. Accompanying that article is a wonderful collection of hand-colored sketches, depicting poultry, pigeon, and rabbit entrants. *Harper's* covered the show again in issues of February 14, 1885; March 8, 1890; February 7, 1891; February 6, 1892; February 10, 1894; and February 12, 1898—each time with splendid illustrations including those in 1891 and 1894 by the famous poultry artist Franklane L. Sewell. Of special note is one illustration of the show hall in 1898 in which gentlemen, ladies, and children, dressed to the nines, are viewing poultry entrants in exhibition cages similar to the grand varnished wood and wire Empire coops used for many years in the poultry building at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse.

The Garden show's ability to draw in the crowds through paid advertising in the non-poultry press media is revealed in J. H. Drevenstedt's article in the *American Fancier* "Persistent and consistent advertising in the city dailies and suburban newspaper, spread over a large territory kept the show in the public eye. The result was thousands of out-of-town visitors found their way into the historic show hall of Greater New York, paying the one dollar and ten cents admission fee without batting an eyelash . . . . They were attracted by the well-advertised exhibits of Lord Dewar's famous English string of birds, and the New York World's Cup and the two hundred and fifty dollar special prize for the best

exhibition pen in the show. It is the same old story of the power of advertising in making good the maxim 'It Pays to Advertise'" (36).

John H. Robinson, Associate Editor of *American Chicken Fancier*, noted in the early 1920s that "the character of the attendance at the Garden is changing . . . There was a time when the attendance at the Garden, especially in the evenings and on holidays, was very largely made up of mere sightseers, a large proportion of these being society people so called, who had the habit of attending entertainments at the Garden. This element has almost disappeared . . . ." At the 1922 show, "One had only to mix frequently with the groups on the floor, before the coops, or at the displays, or at the stands of poultry papers, and listen to question and comments, to see that the attendance was made up almost entirely of people with an active interest in poultry. The only time that there were enough of the others to make their presence felt was on Sunday. Even then the proportion of poultry keepers was larger than would have been the case a few years ago" (27).

Attracting non-poultry folk to a poultry show is challenge enough but to fill Madison Square Garden with a crowd seems an almost impossible goal. Still, the show management achieved this year after year in the 1920s as the following four quotes reveal:

Mr. Grant M. Curtis, Editor, *Reliable Poultry Journal*, reported "the secretary-manager, D. Lincoln Orr, came up to us and said: 'See this crowd? Well, they are just as thick downstairs in the lower level. I came up from there only a few minutes ago and you can hardly get along the aisles.' Wishing to see personally, we at once went down to the lower level and visited all parts of it. Mr. Orr was right. At a number of points it was hard to crowd through the aisles—in fact, on two or three occasions we had to turn and go in the opposite direction, passing around the end of a row of coops, in order to make progress. Writer has

visited the New York Show practically every year since 1898, and in all this period we never before have seen crowds like these, extending through three or four days of the week” (48).

“The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show is held in a great city. Those who dwell there, with the works of man clustered close around, may find diversions and stimuli in the artificial attractions of the city, but when they attend the annual poultry show they find the true recreation and inspiration of nature in the attractive conformation and exquisite apparel of the living forms of domesticated bird life. That is the appeal of the chicken show to the masses of the city” (16).

“Excepting on the first day, when it stormed, the attendance was large, in fact, on Saturday afternoon and evening the aisles were crowded so much, that examination of the specimens was about as comfortable as passing through a turn-stile at a subway station during rush hour” (36).

“The New York Sun of January 10<sup>th</sup> says that the six days attendance exceeded 50,000, a new world’s high record . . .”(49).

We gain a humorous insight into a possible explanation for the show’s extensive early free media coverage from a review of the 1890 show in *Farm-Poultry*: “It was hinted that Mr. Chamberlain, the genial Secretary, having the press bureau in charge, could offer a reporter a glass of brown sherry with a *strictly fresh* egg in it. This the writer cannot vouch for, because, being a Bostonian, he had no use for the contents of Brer. Chamberlain’s sideboard, but took his tippie from the ice-water pitcher!. . . Possibly the sideboard had something to do with getting the generous notices which the New York daily papers gave of the show” (33).

Show coverage by the poultry press was also generous as the Garden poultry show hatched in the golden era of poultry journal publication. Between

1870 and 1900, more than 200 different poultry journals rolled off the presses in America, with fourteen new publications founded in 1894-95 alone (50)! Most of these early publications catered strictly to the fancier; however, as interest turned toward poultry production around the turn of the century, many of these journals failed. Among those that survived are the now classic *Reliable Poultry Journal*, *Poultry Tribune*, *Everybody's Poultry Magazine*, and *Poultry Item*. By 1910, specialty breed publications (e.g., *Wyandotte Herald*, *The Leghorn World*, *Rhode Island Red Journal*, *Plymouth Rock Monthly*) made their appearance and became especially popular during the 1920s when more than 60 poultry publications of all types were available. Three of these breed publications ultimately merged into what became another American classic of the poultry press, the *American Poultry Journal*. During the Depression, publication numbers dwindled again, only to rebound in the late 1930s.

Throughout the ups and downs of publication numbers, the poultry press heartedly supported the Garden show by advertising show dates, printing editorials praising the show and encouraging entries, and in extensive post-show reviews. As we learn from an article in *Poultry*, the Garden show management was uniquely aware that when it came to the press, one hand washed the other: "The Madison Square people certainly were good to the poultry press. They gave them space without cost and arranged it so everyone had an equal chance. It is different in Chicago. There we buy our space and advertise the show free, which is a rather one-sided arrangement. It shows that in New York they appreciate what the poultry press does for them and in Chicago they do not" (24). Poultry press booths lined up in "newspaper row" were a regular part of every Garden show—all nicely decorated and congenially staffed with poultry people who were helpful to visitors and exhibitors alike.

Along with *Harper's Weekly*, the poultry press also allowed its readers to see what the Madison Square Garden show was like. In 1884, *The Poultry World* published a sweeping overview illustration of the show inside Garden I (13). A bird's-eye view photograph of the show inside Garden II was the cover of *Poultry* in February 1905 and a similar overview photo was captioned "The World-Famous Madison Square Garden Poultry Show" in an article entitled "Why Should You Attend a Poultry Show" in the December 1924 issue of *Reliable Poultry Journal*.

The most famous periodical of all for Garden show coverage was the annual "Madison Square Garden Special Edition" of *Poultry Press*—the same journal you are now reading. "For more than thirty-two years, it has been our privilege to serve the Standard Bred Poultry breeders of America and just as it has been a pleasure for this long period of time, it is now a pleasure to give to them the complete report of the Garden Show with the least possible delay of time" (51).

Throughout the year, the poultry press journals kept the Garden poultry show front and center on its readers' minds through reviews and stories of the most recent show; breeder advertisement proclamations of having "Won at the Garden"; and notices, paid for by the Garden show organization, for the next show. The Garden show organization also promoted the show throughout the year through its own publications including the *Premium List*, first edition *Catalogue*; second edition *Marked Catalogue* (listing winners for each class); "*The Red Book*"—a Buyer's Guide and List of Exhibitors; and its own journal, *American Chicken Fancier* of the 1920s. The Garden Service Bureau also boasted with respect to the Garden show organization, "No show of this character renders such valuable service TWELVE MONTHS in the year to exhibitors as we do."

## EDUCATION

Throughout much of its history, the poultry show at Madison Square Garden took center stage among all poultry shows as a venue for education of both exhibition and production interests. “The education features of the show will be enlarged this year and a daily program for lectures will be run both afternoon and evening under the auspices of the Agricultural Colleges of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts, all of which will have their displays in the Concert Hall, which is given up this year entirely to this program. I fully expect that the hall will again be crowded as it was last year and I feel that this department of the show is doing a great deal of good” (41). Also, included in the show that year was a model farm, displayed in the Garden’s restaurant and “moving picture reels” provided by the United States Government.

From 1920 to 1931, the show had a separate Education Department that for many of those years was under the direction of Harry M. Lamon, creator of the Lamona breed. “The educational program of lectures, exhibits, etc., under the personal supervision of Mr. Harry M. Lamon, drew great crowds daily. Every scope of improved poultry production was fully covered(49). In the early 1920s, Mr. Lamon also founded The National Poultry Institute, Inc., for teaching practical poultry production by correspondence. The Institute’s booth was a regular fixture of the Garden Show.

In the early 1920s, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show, Inc., joined the newly created (and apparently short-lived) League of American Poultry Shows, whose members’ aim was “to conduct their shows so as to merit the fullest confidence of the visitors and exhibitors alike and to that end our shows will educationally be worked to the limit” (27). Although the League may have had other objects of purpose less wholeheartedly endorsed or fully understood by the

poultry community at large, the educational aspect of the Garden show was still going strong in 1930 as “Charles D. Cleveland, in charge of a trained troupe of poultry professors, with the very able assistance of some real practical, honest-to-goodness breeders, put on an educational program that was attended by crowds at every session” (25).

In 1947, an educational exhibit was arranged by the New York State Conservation Department.

The annual show also provided a venue for meetings of national poultry organizations, state and regional poultry societies, and specialty breed clubs.

## **COMMERCIAL EXHIBITS**

Little information was published on the presence of commercial exhibits in the early years of the Garden Show aside from this description of the 1890 show in *Harper's Weekly*: “The numberless appliances on sale and the shower of circulars seemed to prove that there is plenty of money in the poultry business for those who know how to handle it. Patent water dishes, brooders, etc. were in abundance, and the newly invented clover cutter was on hand, ready ‘to fill a long-felt want’” (30).

In 1906, poultry machinery and supplies filled a row of booths around the show room, including those for incubators, brooders, spray pumps, poultry foods, bone-cutters, sporting goods, and trapnests (24).

As the show grew in size and reputation, commercial display exhibits became more numerous and diversified. At the 1922 show, there were 44 commercial booths, 17 booths of different poultry publications, and 10 advertising display cages of fowl. Aside from the expected booths of poultry supplies and equipment, feed, incubators and brooders, portable and colony houses, and fencing, there were, throughout the 1920s, individual booths promoting some



less than expected products and services including: bees; semi-solid buttermilk; meat scrapes; dahlias; artificial flowers; honey; ornamental birds; pet shop; milch goats; everlasting greens; cement, paint and chemicals; foxes and minks; enzyme digestant; yeast; limestone grit; and the U. S. Veterans' Bureau.

## THE WAR YEARS

The Madison Square Garden Poultry Show carried on through the years of World War I and resumed after a 12-year hiatus in the midst of World War II. Following the end of World War I, the Garden Show, Inc., published in its journal, *American Chicken Fancier*, "An Appeal for Disabled Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines." The full-page announcement stated: "We are very anxious to help all our disabled veterans, no matter from what branch of the service. We ask the co-operation of all who can give employment to these men who fought in the world's war. Many of these have good training and schooling in poultry. It is the desire of quite a few of them to make poultry their life's work. They are ambitious and willing—all they want is a chance. We will be glad, indeed, to hear from any who can use one or more of these boys" (27). What an extraordinary gesture for the management of a poultry show!

With World War II underway in the European and Pacific theatres, the 1944/45 *Premium List* declared: "It is felt too, however, that it is necessary, now more than ever, to do all we can to promote the Poultry Industry as a Definite Aid to the War Effort and to encourage the breeding of more and better birds in order that we may be in a better position to meet the demands for real quality birds, when we return to normal conditions, and foreign countries need to be restocked."

One year later, the 1945/46 *Premium List* read: "Now that the War is won, and essential necessity of quantity breeding is no longer paramount, it is hoped

that a better and bigger effort will be made to encourage the breeding of Superior Birds. This will put us in a better position to meet the demands for real QUALITY BIRDS, both for home and for foreign purchase.” The *Catalogue* that year offered the greeting: “It is the pleasure and privilege of the officers and Directors of the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show to welcome to the Victory Year Show many new exhibitors and visitors. Among these will be many who last year were serving in the Armed Forces and to you we say ‘Welcome Home and more than welcome to the Great Garden Show.’”

### **A FEW ANECDOTES**

Tucked away in the thousands of pages of reference material reviewed for this article are a few interesting anecdotes that just didn’t seem to fit well within any of the topics previously discussed and yet were either too noteworthy or too amusing to leave out. We present them here for the sake of historical completeness.

“Extensive preparations have been made to arrange the arena of the Garden building in the most attractive manner. At the Madison Avenue entrance two elevated ponds surrounded by plants have been constructed, and in these will be shown different varieties of ducks, geese, etc. In the centre will be a miniature lake, with several pairs of stately white swans floating upon its surface; and over this lake has been erected a ‘corn palace,’ the pillars of which shall be sheathed with dried corn husks, the yellow sheaf pulled back to show the golden red kernel; the roof, too, is to be tiled with ‘corn cobs.’ Altogether every means has been taken to render the Poultry and Pigeon Show a popular success. There will be music every day, and the price of admission has been wisely fixed at fifty cents, with no reserved seats except in the boxes. The exhibition should receive

the hearty support of New York's best people, and prove an instructive object-lesson to the whole community" (52).

"The *Times* of the 25<sup>th</sup>, (Feb.), under the caption—'The benevolent hens find their labor in vain,' gives an amusing description of the proposed pyramid of eggs laid by the fowls on exhibition, which were to be donated, to the hospitals. "The pyramid was started all right, but grew very little after the first day, and it was finally discovered that the attendants were 'earlier birds' than those having the interests of the hospitals in charge, and that the aforesaid attendants were rolling in wealth of omelets, etc., while the poor patients in the hospitals would fare much as did Mother Hubbard's dog" (33).

At the Garden show: "Fred Phillips had a rather bad accident. A hammer slipped and struck him in the mouth breaking three of his teeth, which before had been perfect" (35).

At the Garden show: "A female individual, dressed like a real lady, gave Secretary Crawford a large piece of her mind for allowing the sale of a catalogue with a mistake in it. The show continued until Saturday evening at 10:30, however." (24)

As many of the big shows have today, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show sponsored a banquet during the show. The banquet announcement in the 1926 *Premium List* stated "The ladies are cordially invited . . . ." and "The speaking will be confined to a few short addresses by men of prominence and there will be community singing."

Singing was apparently a rather common activity at poultry shows during the first part of the 1900s. The Seventh World's Poultry Congress held in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1939 even sponsored a song-writing contest and actually published a pamphlet for attendees of 30 Congress songs complete with printed lyrics.

“Music,” however, may have made its first appearance at a Garden Show back in 1892 with W. L. Darby’s official entry of a Whistling Canary (Class No. 1560). The show catalogue indicates in parenthesis under the entry that “This bird cannot Sing, but Whistles ‘Yankee Doodle.’”

“Mr. Harvey C. Wood, Publicity Director, anticipates having a radio connection installed for our next show, January 24-28, 1923” (27). With such a connection, it was possible to transmit accounts of events inside the show hall to the outside world.

In 1921, 1922, and 1923, Campbell’s Soup Farms of Riverton, New Jersey, showed Single Comb Buff Orpingtons at the Garden.

Show management announced in the *American Chicken Fancier*: “Not Muzzled—Judges at the coming Madison Square Garden Poultry Show can dine with whomsoever they please” (27). The announcement leaves much to be read between the lines.

And, of course, the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show is rife with stories—stories passed down orally over the years—without much—at least as yet uncovered—written or artistic documentation.

There are stories of couples, dressed in their finest attire, sipping champagne as they strolled the aisles of “wondrous fowls” while a full orchestra serenaded them from the balcony.

There are stories of crowds “lined up around the block” waiting for admission to the “poultry palace.”

And there are stories of young boys going to the Garden show with their fathers or grandfathers or uncles and while there succumbing to some variant strain of Cochin Mania or Hen Fever that infected them for the rest of their lives.

## THE LEGACY OF THE MADISON SQUARE GARDEN POULTRY SHOW

What can the greatest poultry show in American history teach us? What does it show us we can we do now to improve the fancy? How can it help us to carry the fancy into the future?

The answers to these questions can be divided between those in club management who put on shows and those who exhibit at shows.

For those in show management, the Garden show's demonstrates that it is very important to:

**1) Advertise and promote.** Build the reputation and exposure of your show through advertising in the poultry press both before the show as much as possible and after the show. A pre-show ad in the local newspaper, Penny Saver, or swap sheet may increase your show's attendance by exhibitors, buyers of stock, and the public. Whereas advertising costs money, promotion relies much more on legwork and creative thinking. Inform the local TV and radio stations about the show, try to make personal appearances to talk about the show; encourage all media to come to the show and make sure your show is included in all of the media lists of "Coming Events" and "Things to Do." Posters and fliers are inexpensive to make yet can reap big benefits when posted at feed stores, hardware stores, and other pet and livestock-oriented venues.

**2) Strive for unsurpassed quality.** Every year make your show better than it was the year before. There is always room for improvement.

**3) Respect your exhibitors.** Exhibitors are a show's lifeblood. Show management is their host. Be friendly and helpful. Listen to exhibitors' comments and suggestions and, when appropriate, act on them.

**4) Embrace change.** Don't be afraid to think out of the box in every aspect of putting on a show. Be open to new ideas. Just because you've always done something the same way doesn't mean it couldn't be made better doing it differently.

**5) Offer worthy specials.** Work hard to find sponsors and donors of awards that will excite exhibitors and entice them to attend your show. Solicit breed and specialty clubs, individuals, and local commerce—especially those in livestock-related businesses and businesses that may benefit from your show (nearby gas stations, restaurants, hotels, convenience stores).

**6) Have on-floor supervision.** Show management should be continuously visible and recognizable on the showroom floor to affably assist exhibitors and visitors; monitor the safety, health, and conditions of entrants; and maintain a clean and pleasant environment.

**7) Promote the show as a venue for sales.** The opportunity to buy birds and poultry supplies draws both exhibitors and non-exhibitors. The sales area should be equal in quality to the rest of the show both in presentation and supervision. Make every attempt to assist sellers and buyers.

For exhibitors, the Garden show proves that it is important to:

**1) Advertise.** Advertise as much and as often as you can. In your own ads, include the names of the shows you will be attending, especially if you will have stock there to sell. After the show, advertise your success, congratulate others, or express appreciation to the show sponsors for their efforts. Keeping your name and your favorite shows' names out there for all to see can only bring mutual benefit.

**2) Offer specials.** Specials attract exhibitors, increase competition, and, in the long run, enhance the quality of entrants. Offer specials in classes of

special interest to you but also sponsor specials for breeds and varieties with traditionally low entry numbers. It is to all of our benefit to maintain the diversity of domestic poultry. The importance of specials was recognized even at the first official Garden show in 1890: “The generous rivalry and keen competition for these special prizes adds greatly to the interest of the show, and they are a substantial aid to getting the birds to the exhibition” (33). It is still true today. Also, it is vitally important to support the Youth Show with specials and donations. As we all know, “the juniors are the future of the fancy.”

**3) Respect the rules and regulations.** Show management and exhibitors are in a symbiotic relationship. When they work together in a congenial atmosphere, the success of the show is greatly enhanced.

**4) Show quality birds.** Remember: proper conditioning and grooming can make all the difference. Your birds are a reflection of you as a showman, exhibitor, and breeder. Take pride in each and every one of your entries.

As the saying goes: “You can’t go back.” There will never be another Madison Square Garden Poultry Show. It stands alone as the premier poultry show in American history. We have other great shows today—a lot of them. In each of them and every other show held each weekend across the country, the legacy of Madison Square Garden echoes through our showrooms with every honk, quack, cackle, and crow.

The authors would like to thank Paul Kroll and, posthumously, Alex Duffy and Charles Burmaster for providing much of the original documentation for this article.

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